My Religion

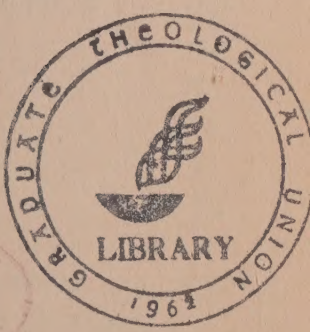
PRESENTED BY

The Rev.H.V.Miller.

MY RELIGION

MY RELIGION

Arnold Bennett
Hugh Walpole
Rebecca West
J. D. Beresford
Israel Zangwill
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
E. Phillips Oppenheim
Compton Mackenzie
H. De Vere Stacpoole
Henry Arthur Jones



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK ✦ ✦ MCMXXVI

R
O
18
26

RA
M99

COPYRIGHT, 1926, BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Arnold Bennett	1
Hugh Walpole	9
Rebecca West	17
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	27
E. Phillips Oppenheim	37
Compton Mackenzie	45
J. D. Beresford	55
Israel Zangwill	63
H. De Vere Stacpoole	75
Henry Arthur Jones	83
"The Unknown Man"	103
Summary by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	113
The Dilemma of Christianity by Arnold Bennett	129
The Last Word by the Bishop of London	139
Appendix	149
Challenge to Mr. Bennett by Dr. Norwood	181

ARNOLD BENNETT

WORKS BY ARNOLD BENNETT

A Man from the North
The Grand Babylon Hotel
Anna of the Five Towns
The Truth about an Author
Leonora
A Great Man
Whom God Hath Joined
The Grim Smile of the Five Towns
Buried Alive
The Old Wives' Tale
Clayhanger
The Card
Hilda Lessways
The Matador of the Five Towns
The Regent
The Price of Love
These Twain
The Lion's Share
Books and Persons
The Pretty Lady
The Roll Call
From the Log of the Velsa
Our Women
Things That Have Interested Me
Mr. Prohack
Lillian
Riceyman Steps
Cupid and Common Sense
What the Public Wants
The Honeymoon
Milestones (*with Edward Knobloch*)
The Great Adventure
The Title
Judith
Sacred and Profane Love
The Love Match
Body and Soul
London Life (*with Edward Knobloch*)

I. ARNOLD BENNETT

It is curious how bold some very ordinary statements seem when they are put into print in a popular newspaper. I do not believe, and never have at any time believed, in the divinity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, heaven, hell, the immortality of the soul, the divine inspiration of the Bible. These denials of belief are taken for granted in the conversation of the vast majority of my friends and acquaintances. And, far from seeming bold, they are so commonplace to us that we very rarely trouble to repeat them, much less argue about them.

There are exceptions. I know personally one or two men of real intelligence who stand by the tenets of the Anglican variety, or some other variety, of Christian doctrine—though always with considerable mental reservations. Also, I read one or two contemporary Christian writers who appear to me to possess real intelligence. I respect these believers and all believers. But, broadly speaking, the Christian dogma does not enter into my social, spiritual,

or intellectual life at all. Nor does the dogma of any other religion.

Of all the Oriental creeds of which I have knowledge, the Christian creed is to me the least satisfactory, save only that of Mohammedanism. (It should be remembered that the Christian creed is Oriental. Every Occidental creed in Europe has died out.) On the other hand, the moral teaching of Christ makes a most powerful appeal to me, and I should not care to assert that in the field of morals Christ was not the greatest man that ever lived.

All religious dogma, of course, assumes that there is a future life, and most of it deals with the influence of our earthly conduct upon the future life. If here we do or believe such and such things we shall be rewarded beyond the grave. If we do or believe such and such other things we shall be punished beyond the grave. These dogmas vary in different religions and often within the same religion, and are sometimes mutually contradictory. None of them has ever appealed to me sufficiently to persuade me of its truth. I have, therefore, kept an open mind about them.

But long ago I ceased to feel any interest in any of them, being convinced that I could never arrive at any definite conclusion concerning them, and

hence that to occupy myself with them was a waste of my time. There may be a heaven; there may be a hell. And also there may not be. I don't know, and I feel sure that on earth I never shall know. On a balance of probabilities I am inclined to accept the theory of a future life; and I am fairly sure that, if indeed there is a future life, my conduct in this present life will materially affect the nature of it. Further than this I do not go, cannot go, and do not wish to go.

Is there a God? Call this phenomenon a First Cause, a Supreme Being, a Creator—what you like; God is a good name for it. I believe that there is a God, if only for the reason that I can imagine no other explanation of a marvellous, scientifically-ordered, and law-controlled universe. This argument is called "the argument from design," and it presents itself to me as a pretty good argument. But what may be the attributes of God, and His ultimate aim, I have not the slightest idea. And I do not exercise my brain in trying to decide what His aim is, because I feel that my brain is utterly unequal to so sublime a problem, and could not possibly solve it. Why should I agitate myself over a matter which exceeds my mental powers? I do not agitate myself.

There is, however, another argument for the existence of God which, for me, is more cogent even than the rather physical argument from design—namely, that in every one of us is a force which we call conscience, a force which tends always in the direction of justice, mercy, and kindness. Nobody is without a conscience; the conduct of nobody is entirely uninfluenced by his conscience. The universality of conscience, together with the broad uniformity of its influence on conduct, convinces me far more satisfactorily than anything else that it must have been implanted in us by a Creator Who had a clear aim (whatever that aim may be) in the creation and slow evolution of His universe. I got this idea many years since from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina,* and it has never left me.

As this is (I think) my only faith, and as it directly implies "works," my religion is necessarily a religion of works rather than of faith. I absolutely dismiss the extraordinary and too convenient notion that a man may safely do as he chooses provided he dies in a certain faith. Such a notion insults my reason. I do not say that it insults everybody's reason, for, obviously, it does not, but merely that it insults mine. I am for works unceasingly and all the time. I think that every act counts, for-

ever, either for or against the ultimate fulfilment of happiness. I might say every thought as well as every act, but in my view a thought is an act, and, just as much as an act, influences the development of the individuality. I do not believe that a man can think evil and do good. If I despise a fellow-creature and scornfully give him a sovereign to help him out of a hole, I am both thinking evil and doing evil.

It seems to me that Christ better than anybody understood the secret of happiness, which is the avowed end of all religious beliefs. Christ taught an all-embracing sympathy. He taught humility, meekness. He taught us to judge not that we be not judged. He taught forgiveness. He taught the return of good for evil. In a word, His religion was, in practice, the religion of kindliness.

I do not hold that kindliness comprises the whole of "works," and that nothing else matters. Far from it. But I do hold that without kindliness, mercy, humility, forgiveness, and such acts as the suffering of fools gladly, no amount of "works" can be effective, or have any real value in a religious sense.

And I hold further that the cultivation, often painfully difficult, of these virtues should constitute the main part of religion, that in their absence no be-

lief in dogma can be effective, and that these virtues can be effective without any dogma whatever. They alone refine the soul, nourish the deepest roots of existence, and make happiness possible. I can see all round me examples of men brilliantly successful in riches, power, learning, and creative genius who are restless, dissatisfied, and unhappy because they have despised these virtues. These virtues are social virtues—the most important of all virtues.

I think that Christianity as a force might have effectively and lustily survived if it had not for centuries so notoriously forgotten the teaching of its own Founder. What will take the place of dogmatic Christianity I cannot guess. But I have a conviction that whatever it is, if it is not based on kindliness, it will fail.

HUGH WALPOLE

WORKS BY HUGH WALPOLE

The Wooden Horse
Maradick at Forty
Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill
The Prelude to Adventure
Fortitude
The Duchess of Wrexe
The Golden Scarecrow
The Dark Forest
Joseph Conrad
The Green Mirror
The Secret City
Jeremy
The Captives
The Thirteen Travellers
The Young Enchanted
The Cathedral
Jeremy and Hamlet
The Old Ladies

II. HUGH WALPOLE

RELIGION has become in these post-war days so individual a thing that no one is afraid of speaking of it. The time has long passed for religious persecution, whether social, moral, or political, and I suppose if you were to question nine out of ten grown men and women of to-day as to their religious experience they would describe to you an evolution through three states of discovery. First, the child's acceptance of the dogmas handed over to it by its elders; second, the adolescent's reaction against that acceptance; and, third, the evolution of some positive personal opinion born of personal experience.

I myself passed through exactly these three stages. I was bred up in the very heart of Church of England teaching, I saw it working on every side of me; the only grown-up people I ever saw believed, or appeared to believe, implicitly in these teachings. Until I was eighteen or nineteen I did no direct, active thinking about religion, but simply accepted what I was given; I went to church twice every Sunday, and was bored part of the time and senti-

mentally moved by hymns, emotional sermons, and lights and colours. I made the discovery made by all children that no one was perfect, and that to be a clergyman or a church worker or a choir boy did not mean that you were removed from the world of hasty temper, ill-speaking, and slandering and dangerous imaginings; I was a choir boy myself. But I never thought during this period as to whether the dogmas of the Church of England were for me true or false; I accepted them as certain.

I was intended to be a clergyman and, to give me experience, I was sent for a year to work in a mission for seamen in Liverpool. It was there that everything crumbled; before the realities of life that I was now facing I was compelled to ask myself questions. I met constantly men much older than I, much wiser than I, and much braver than I, who did not believe one of the things that I accepted as true. Suddenly, with a precipitancy far too crude I believed in nothing; I decided that I would not be a clergyman.

From this moment until the outbreak of war in 1914 I was occupied, I think, with discovering how beautiful and exciting and amusing this world was, and especially my place in it. The beauty of Nature and the arts and the human lives around me was

translated easily by me into what I fancied was religion; that is, I myself was having an exciting time, was in good health, was free to move about the world, and was pursuing an art that was far more generous in what it gave than in what I could give to it. I imagined easily and complaisantly a loose and vague condition of benevolence in which everything was intended for the best and everyone got what he deserved.

Then the war came, and, with its coming, a vague sense of fear that had been with me ever since I was a small child at a private school was translated into very positive experience.

Like millions of others, I, who had never before seen more than the death of a bird, witnessed day after day every kind of horror; indeed I believe that the retreat of the Russian Army back to Tarnopol in the second year of the war offered even more persistent experiences of horror, distress, and wasted life than many other phases of the war. And yet undoubtedly the main experience that I got from the war was the unimportance of physical death. Again and again and again it was impressed on me, whether I wished it or not, that the cessation of bodily life did not mean the cessation of spiritual life.

Spiritual life is so vague a phrase that I am re-

luctant to use it, but what I mean is that I became gradually suspicious that something of far greater import than the life of the body was involved in the history of each individual; I say "suspicious" because now, at the age of forty-one, I can, for myself, speak with no positive certainty. I have witnessed that certainty of immortality in many others, and I have also many friends to whom the possibility of anything but material life seems absurd, but at the last one can learn only through one's own experience.

The important point for me was that after the second year of the war I was conscious in myself of the existence of some other life besides my physical one. I had not wished nor asked for it, I had done nothing definite myself towards the creation of it; it was simply there as my face and hands and feet were there.

As I became increasingly aware of this second life I became increasingly anxious to avoid falsehood with regard to it; I told myself that it was there because I wished it, or because I was sentimental, or because I was egoistic and could not bear to think of my own individuality fading into nothing in so short a time, or because I cared for certain people very deeply and did not wish that physical death

should separate us, or because the idea of immortality of one kind or another gave the whole of life a largeness and beauty that it otherwise did not have.

I began to read a good deal on mystical subjects, but my brain is neither philosophical nor accurate, and I found that in general I got very little help from books. Moreover, I discovered after a while that this second life continued to develop and grow, apart from anything that I did or wished. Its growth did not influence very greatly my actions; I was not on the whole a better man because of it; my good actions sprang in the main from social or personal causes—because I did not wish to hurt someone's feelings, because I was afraid of public opinion, or because I was afraid of myself; but I did discover that, as time passed, the horizon widened, my values changed, things became interesting to me that had never been interesting before; I wanted more time for silence and quiet, not because I began to think marvellously or experience any kind of remote ecstasies, but it was rather as though something was pushing its way, in spite of myself, through the stuff of my nature. I began to believe with Keats that the purpose of life was the education of the soul.

I am well aware how desperately vague this is.

No man of forty can claim that his experience of life is either final or definite, but at the present I think my credo is that I believe that one of the first necessities for a human being is an absolute tolerance of the religious discoveries of every other human being, that a completely materialistic explanation of our life on this planet accounts less and less for many of our inner experiences; that more and more clearly as one grows the teachings of Christ, stripped of the dogmas that others have put on them, apply with amazing wisdom and knowledge to modern conditions, and that no amount of feeble living and persistent moral failure on one's own part alters the fundamental wisdom of these teachings.

It seems to me that in general the people of our time are passing from rather blind obedience to dogmatic teaching to an active demand for some freer, more individual, spiritual life. I believe that many men to-day would agree with me in this, that they are experiencing spiritual history almost against their will, and that the marvellous modern progress of science will in the end bring men more securely into religious belief rather than away from it.

REBECCA WEST

WORKS BY REBECCA WEST

Henry James *The Judge* *The Return of the Soldier*

III. REBECCA WEST

PROVIDED that there is affection in a family, the father and mother confirm when they are old the miracle they performed when they were young. Then they loved and gave their children life; now they die, and make that gift absolute by taking away the fear of death from their children; for after one has watched a dying person with the clairvoyant eye of affection the idea of death as a triumph of decay passes for ever. One perceives that he is not ceasing to exist but passing into another universe.

The transition may be excruciatingly painful; quite possibly he takes with him no memory of this life; and there is no reason to suppose that the other universe is more careful of its inhabitants than this. But it is at any rate a universe of greater beauty than this. Of that one is made aware by an intuition which tells us constantly throughout life that there are certain actions we perform and emotions we feel which, though they may not be injurious or repellent, and may, indeed, be pleasurable and harmless, are limited to this universe.

One knows, therefore, that just so far as such actions and emotions predominate in one's life one will perish with this universe. A drunkard; a man who spends his whole life in playing some game like tennis or chess; a prostitute who spends her whole life in mechanical sexual acts which have no physical or spiritual consequence; a county hostess who spends her whole life in trivial social activities—all these die when they die. But there are other actions and emotions, of greater nobility and intensity, which print through this universe and make an impression on that other universe; and just so far as such actions and emotions predominate in one's life one does not die in death. Anyone who warmly loves anyone else; anyone who creates good art or sound thought; anyone who achieves courage and generosity; anyone who does any work well; what such as these do happens not only in this life which passes but in another life which continues.

These certainties of mine cannot be proved by any logical process; but I do not find that in the least disturbing, for it is not necessary that they should be. I am sure enough of them. The only use of any logical proof would be to convince other people of their reality, and that I do not want to do; for I am certain that everybody has the same chance of

receiving these intuitions that I have. Indeed, were I the only person, or one of a restricted number of persons, who could receive them, then this would be such an unjust cosmos that I would lose all interest in it and seek annihilation by confining myself to the actions and emotions which perish with this world. Since this is so, I should be afraid to convince anybody else of the reality of my intuitions, for as the human animal is above all things indolent, he would probably accept my proof as an assurance that life has a meaning and would refrain from seeking for his own revelation which alone can give him that assurance in a form suited to the individual needs of his soul.

I do not believe that membership of any Christian Church would heighten my consciousness of these intuitions or help me to act on them. I occasionally go to church. I go sometimes to Nonconformist services because it seems to me that in the preachers you hear there, and in the congregations that listen to them, you get as fine a pre-occupation with problems of conduct and duty as have probably ever been shown by any people since the world began. These people certainly do not believe in hell. I doubt if more than a few seriously believe in any system of rewards for the virtuous in the after-life. But they

are passionately anxious to be good just for the sake of being good; they are anxious, for no other reason than altruism, to find out exactly what their duty to their fellow men is and how they can best perform it.

I go also to Roman Catholic churches at times, for the sake of the ritual. That seems to me to be of great value, because it draws a picture of spiritual facts which human language still finds it difficult to express adequately or in a form equally comprehensible by all kinds of people. When one sees a beautiful church full of worshippers kneeling in attitudes of adoration in front of an altar where a cardinal, in robes the very colour of power and majesty, abases himself before a cross on which there hangs a naked man who was poor and despised and rejected, one gets a complete expression of a certain group of spiritual ideas that can struggle into words only one aspect at a time. What is written on the tomb of Hafiz, "O heart, be a slave to the King of the World and be a King," writes like a flash of lightning the spiritual truth that if one is to live with dignity one must bend one's will to a purpose other than one's own well-being. But the ritual in the Church says it better; and it says more.

Nevertheless, I feel that Christianity must be regarded not as a final revelation but as a phase of rev-

elation. The creative spirit informing the world, which you may call God if you like, produced Christ to satisfy the spiritual needs of man as he was during the centuries that resulted in the establishment of modern Europe. He was then, for the most part, very poor; whether he was poor or rich he was racked by diseases he could not understand; an unorganised economic system and lack of knowledge subjected him to famines, and an unresolved political system involved him in constant warfare. In such a harsh and unsettled world he might well doubt if the law of the universe were not hate and the meaning of life bitterness. Christ came to comfort him against these adversities. He proved to him that poverty and suffering could be borne so sweetly that they exalted a man above the proudest and richest king; He struck back some of the world's swords by preaching the beauty of peace; He assured man that love was a power in the universe by coming to render him these services though He knew He must pay for it with His life.

But certain forms which Christianity had to take to satisfy the needs of the man of that age are unsuited to the man of this age. There is, for instance, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. The ordinary pre-Christian man was not accustomed to the idea of

moral power unsupported by force. It would have been impossible to convince him that a man was divine simply because his behaviour was supremely beautiful. Therefore, Christ had to be recommended to him by the ascription of a miraculous origin. Now that we have had Christ's lesson set before us this is quite unnecessary.

Ecclesiastics who talk about the Virgin Birth are as absurd as persons would be who, having been visited by the wisest man in the world, stopped repeating his wisdom to an audience longing to hear it and wrangled whether he had travelled to their house by a 'bus or a tramcar. The doctrine of the Atonement is, to me, as irrelevant. That a father should invent the laws of a game knowing that they must be broken, force people to play it, sentence the players to punishment for breaking them, and accept the agony of his son as a substitute for the punishment, was credible enough to people who believed that hate might be the ultimate law of life. To us who have been given the Christian idea of love and mercy as an essential part of divinity, it is not credible. Nor is it necessary. Man was in a dark place. Christ came to comfort. Why man had to be in a dark place we do not and cannot know, for our half-grown brains obviously cannot grasp the whole truth

about the universe. But we do ourselves a mischief if we do not admit our ignorance and retain an explanation which is neither true nor useful.

But even when Christianity is stripped of doctrines that were created to serve a special purpose, but now serve none, there is no reason to suppose that it is the final revelation of the Divine to humanity. There might quite possibly come another world that would be to us as absolute a solvent of our difficulties about life as Christianity was to the difficulties of the early Christians. I find confirmation of that hope in the feeling of sacredness that I intuitively perceive in all efforts to extend the sphere of personal liberty. When we let people do what they like and say what they like we are giving the Divine a chance to express itself when it comes. The spirit of tolerance represents the merciful hand of Christ thrust through ages, saving the next Christ from crucifixion.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

WORKS BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

A Study in Scarlet
Micah Clark
The Captain of the Polestar
The Sign of the Four
The White Company
The Firm of Girdlestone
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
The Refugees
The Great Shadow
The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes
Round the Red Lamp
The Stark Munro Letters
The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard
Rodney Stone
Uncle Bernac
The Tragedy of the Korosko
Songs of Action
A Duet with an Occasional Chorus
Halves (A Play)
Story of Waterloo (One-act Play)
The Green Flag
The Great Boer War
The Hound of the Baskervilles
Adventures of Gerard
Return of Sherlock Holmes
Brigadier Gerard (A Comedy)
Sir Nigel
Through the Magic Door
The Fires of Fate (A Play)
The Crime of the Congo
Songs of the Road
The Lost World
The Poison Belt
The Case of Oscar Slater
The Valley of Fear
A Visit to Three Fronts
The New Revelation: History of the British Campaign in France and Flanders
Danger
His Last Bow
The Vital Message
The Guards Came Through
The Wanderings of a Spiritualist
The Coming of the Fairies
Our American Adventure
Three of Them
Our Second American Adventure
Memories and Adventures
Translation of Denis' Joan of Arc.

IV. SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

It must be an easy matter to write of one's religion when that religion has been inherited from one's ancestors, endorsed by one's own mental acquiescence, and remained unchanged as the explanation and guide of life. But it is different when in attempted pursuit of truth one has sought and tested and proved and discarded with a firm determination never, never to assent to that which one's reason condemns. Then it is a difficult and even a painful task, for it involves probing deeply into the springs of action in one's own soul.

I was born into a Roman Catholic family and was educated as such. Even now I must admit that if I were forced to become an orthodox Christian and to justify my position by Scriptural texts, or by an appeal to the traditions of the early Church, I should again be a Catholic. As an abstract creed its position is strong. As a practical system it has produced both the most Christian and the most un-Christian types of any religion. I could, on the one hand,

imagine nothing more opposed to all that Christ stood for than a Dominican familiar—the most dreadful figure in all history—or a Borgia Pope.

Indeed, any Pope who lives in a palace and wears a triple tiara is a strange representative of Him who knew not where to lay His head. But, on the other hand, where shall we find anything more beautiful than a Francis d'Assisi, a Damien among the lepers, a Curé d'Ars, or, indeed, any of that host of gentle, humble souls who, as parish priests, missionaries, or workers among the poor, subordinate their own lives to that of the Church? It is only fair, however, to add that all creeds have been associated with some beautiful souls, but that none has ever evolved a system so infernal as the Inquisition.

My quarrel, as I attained my fuller power of mind, was not merely with the Catholic Church—though its intolerance was always abhorrent to me. It had so much to attract in its tradition and its beauty that I could not conceive myself turning from it to any other form of Christian orthodoxy.

My real quarrel was with that scheme which was common to all Churches, involving as it does the assumption that man was born with a hereditary stain upon him, that this stain, for which he was not personally responsible, had to be atoned for, and that

the Creator of all things was compelled to make a blood sacrifice of His own innocent Son in order to neutralise this mysterious curse.

I remember reading the phrase "an intellectual nightmare" as applied to such a system, and it echoed my own thought. It seemed to me that no heathen tribe had ever conceived so grotesque an idea, and I turned away from such a creed and wandered into a darkness which was only dimly lit by my own, God-given reason.

There followed my years of agnosticism. I remained a firm believer in God, for I clearly saw order in the universe, and the existence of order postulates a central Intelligence. That supreme Intelligence was my God. But all else I rejected. As to the survival of the individual soul, it seemed to me that all the argument was against it. Did this soul not obviously spring from the brain? An accident to the brain would affect it and possibly turn a saint into a sinner. My medical knowledge assured me of the fact.

Alcohol and many drugs seemed to influence the soul, making the individual quarrelsome, kindly, or exalted. Was it not clear, then, that mind sprang from matter? How could it survive when matter had dissolved into its chemical atoms? The argu-

ment seemed final, and I was left with no hope and no particular desire. It was a valley of gloom, with death and extinction waiting at the end. There was nothing but plain, obvious duty and self-respect as an acting religion.

Then came the strange experiences which slowly made me realise that rational agnosticism is not a terminus of our journey, but rather a junction where one changes from an old line on to a new one. My mind had hitherto been filled with an ignorant and unreasoning contempt for psychic subjects. They ran clean counter to all my views, and seemed to me to be half fancy and half fraud.

But telepathy gave me pause. My whole previous case rested upon the supposition that brain produced soul or mind. But if the brain could indeed affect another brain at a distance, then, clearly, there was something there which was psychic rather than material. I made sure of telepathy by personal experiment. It shook the whole fabric of my philosophy and enlarged my ideas of the possible.

Gradually I was drawn into psychic investigation and reading. The latter affected me much. I read Judge Edmonds, Crookes, Wallace and Myers. I began to see that the facts were against me, and that there was an alternative to my former views. I

saw that the brain might be something which is acted upon rather than something which acts, and that its disorganisation by accident or by drugs might prevent such action, as the broken fiddle prevents the efforts of the musician.

I read and read. The opponents of psychic things were great men, Huxleys and Kelvins, but they were ready to admit that they had not found time to study the matter. On the other hand, the advocates of spirit had studied it deeply, and spoke of what they had seen. But then the phenomena were so childish, the messages so futile—how could I accept them as being from another world?

Slowly—too slowly—my knowledge expanded. I was hampered always by preconceived prejudice. Gradually one or two facts emerged. One was that these phenomena appeared trivial because I did not appreciate their object. A knock at the door is in itself trivial. But it draws attention to the person knocking, and that may not be trivial. What were these rappings save knockings at the door of our intelligence? They were signals to engage our attention.

Then, as to the character of some of the messages, if death truly made no change at all in the individual, as was asserted by the Spiritualists, then,

as the average man or woman is of no very advanced intelligence, was it not reasonable that the average message should be superficial? One by one my difficulties disappeared, while the personal evidence grew ever stronger.

But it was only in the war time—early in 1916 to be exact—that my case was complete and that I was *sure*. Then the enormous importance of it overwhelmed my mind. The whole world was crying out, "Where are our dead?" "Where are those grand young fellows who only yesterday were so full of life and energy?" I knew where they were. I was sure that I knew. My wife, who had shared the evidence and in consequence the conviction, felt as I did. Together we determined that we should devote the rest of our lives to handing on this knowledge and comfort to others. Nearly ten years have passed since that resolution, and it is stronger with us now than then. There is no space here to go into the evidence, and it is fully recorded elsewhere, but it is, to my mind, conclusive that those we call dead have long been able to reach us, but have found us insensible to their approach.

It is not merely the reunion with our lost ones which has been effected. Something much higher has been obtained. We have got into contact with vir-

tuous souls long passed over who now correspond to what were called angels. From them we get direct religious teaching founded upon actual experience. It is in many ways a new conception, and yet it has come through to us in many lands and through many instruments. It is simple. It is reasonable. Above all, it is extraordinarily comforting.

When once you are convinced of its truth, this world holds no terror for you, and you look into the future unafraid, with no fear of death. It tells us of a really merciful God, whose rewards are immense, and whose judgments are mild; of a new world which contains that work and those pleasures which are most congenial to us, of a gradual evolution from a lowly paradise to the higher ones, of the development of our own natural faculties, of homes and family circles and the reunion of all who love, even of the lowly animal world, with the exclusion of all who jar. Such is the life beyond as pictured by those who live it.

But the wonderful thing is that by devious paths we have got back to Christianity once more, and that the Christ figure appears—to me, at least—more beautiful and understandable than ever. The worst that any sect can do for Christ is to make Him incredible. Now He appeared as a great heaven-sent

Teacher living a life which was to be our example. That was surely enough without any question of a mystical atonement.

It is not for our mosquito brains to say what degree of divinity was in Him, but we can surely say that He was nearer the divine than we, and that His teaching is the most beautiful of which we have cognisance. So in a circle we have come back to Him—the great, kindly, brooding Spirit who yearns over the world which is His special care. He has ceased to be a miracle. He has become our dear friend and brother.

Such in brief space has been the outcome of my religious evolution. Is it final? I do not know, but I do know that what I have is solid, even if more should hereafter be added thereto.

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

WORKS BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

The Master Mummer
Anna the Adventuress
Mysterious Mr. Sabin
A Man and His Kingdom
The Survivor
The Traitor
A Prince of Sinners
Mr. Wingrave, Millionaire
A Maker of History
The Secret
Conspirators
The Missioner
Jeanne of the Marshes
The Illustrious Prince
The Missing Delora
The Falling Star
Havoc
Double Four
Peter Ruff
The Lighted Way
The Mischief Maker
The Way of These Women
The Amazing Partnership
The Game of Liberty
A People's Man
Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo
The Double Traitor
The Kingdom of the Blind
The Other Romilly
Mr. Lessingham Goes Home
The Great Impersonation
The Great Prince Shan
The Inevitable Millionaires
Nobody's Man
The Evil Shepherd
The Mystery Road
The Wrath to Come

V. E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

It is a curious feature of our social and conversational life that the one subject which is of supreme and vital importance to every human being is the least often discussed—our thoughts and feelings concerning the hereafter and the shaping of our lives in accordance with our theories or convictions. It seems, indeed, as though the whole world of men as well as women were afflicted with a curious shyness when the subject of religion is even indirectly alluded to.

In these days of bridge and mah jongg, universal dancing and freer intercourse between the sexes, the habitude of conversation between men at their clubs and other meeting places has naturally enough declined.

Yet there are always friendships, and with friendship an exchange of views upon all the vital matters of life. These continue to some extent, yet it is a curious fact that if the conversation between any little company of intellectuals should wander from sport or literature or art to the graver question of

a possible hereafter, even the most brilliant talkers become tongue-tied, there are self-conscious gaps in the flow of speech, and there is an universal air of relief when, as usually happens before long, the subject is changed.

Youth is sometimes bolder, and deliberately seeks elucidation of the one ageless, impenetrable mystery; but among the middle-aged and elderly there exists almost a cult of silence concerning those problems where science has failed us and which faith in the mystic teachings of the spiritual leaders of the world can alone solve. From the earliest dawn of intelligence we walk through life, whether our way lies through the pleasure gardens or across the rugged places, along the edge of a mysterious and yawning abyss into whose unfathomable depths we know that some day or other we must commit ourselves.

There are times—times, as a rule, of solitary thought—during which we strain our eyes looking downwards, but for the most part we accept our destiny with a curious mixture of fatalism and an ostrich-like capacity for burying our heads in the affairs of the world until the last moment.

Without any hope or fear of the hereafter we should logically become a world of lunatics, yet all those forms of faith and belief which from the

earliest days of history have produced a countless procession of saints and heroes, have grown fainter throughout the generations until to-day it really seems as though in future ages, not far removed from our own, all established forms of worship will die of sheer inanition.

It is the penalty which we are paying for a larger measure of intellectual comprehension, for greater inroads into the mysterious world of science, that with all such developments the primitive faith of men in God grows fainter and fainter. Centuries ago religion was an easy thing. Man believed what he felt and what he was taught. Nowadays, when the utilitarianism of a more mechanical world has destroyed to a large extent the earlier and sweeter forms of apprehension born of faith and sentiment, religion as expressed by any definite formulæ is sinking fast into the background of our lives, taking its place among the dead, beautiful things whose inspiration is past—the mythology of Greece, the pictured worship of the Egyptians.

It is scarcely our fault. It is a matter often, when one contemplates the simple, joyous lives of past generations, for deep and bitter regret that the wholehearted, unquestioning faith with which they accepted the priest-expounded explanations of the prob-

lems of the universe has in a large measure become impossible to the dwellers in this bustling world of ours—impossible, whatever effort of will or brain we devote towards its renascence.

With it has passed without the shadow of a doubt much of the spirituality of our lives; our art has become distorted and uninspired, and even our national existence has felt the need of that flame of idealism which gave it colour and force. The materialist to-day has come into his own. Yet the greatest sceptic has to admit that there is implanted in us from some unknown source, together with our other inherent proclivities, certain aspirations towards a world morality, the cultivation of which brings us a measure of content and happiness which we can gain by no other means.

My religion is the religion of the man in the street —an attitude of, I hope, reverent ignorance as regards the great unsolved problems of life and death, but a desire, as one looks upward in vain, to pass through one's day-by-day life believing that in one's own fellow-creatures there must be a spark of that divinity which elsewhere eludes us, an inclination always to accept the most charitable view of a fellow-creature's misdoings, to believe the best of everyone with whom one is brought into contact, and to help

so far as one can those who are confronted with graver problems of life than we ourselves are called upon to meet.

There seems to be no other religion left to-day for the thinking man but to worship the unknown God through his fellows, fulfilling thereby a primitive and inherent instinct. We are few of us heroes, we all have our weaknesses, but it is always possible in yielding to them to sacrifice as little as may be the happiness of others. The struggle to keep our place in life is forced upon us, but we may fight for our own hand and still retain a measure of consideration for those whose interests clash with our own.

We are fundamentally selfish by the logic of necessity, forced into an attitude of self-preservation by the laws of life. Still, at the cost of a little thought, we can carry on the fight without undue hurt to others, with some blending indeed of altruistic effort. If the shadows of the great abyss reveal to us nothing of what may lie beneath their terrifying embrace, the best preparation for the inevitable end, in the absence of that rare gift of absolute faith, would seem to be the conviction, earned by continual effort, that the happiness of one's fellow-creatures had been rather added to than marred by one's passage through life.

COMPTON MACKENZIE

WORKS BY COMPTON MACKENZIE

The Passionate Elopement
Carnival
Kensington Rhymes
Sinister Street (*Vols.* 1 *and* 2)
Guy and Pauline
Sylvia Scarlett
Sylvia and Michael
Poor Relations
The Vanity Girl
Rich Relatives
The Altar Steps
The Seven Ages of Woman
The Parson's Progress
Gramophone Nights (*with Archibald Marshall*)
The Heavenly Ladder
Santa Claus in Summer
The Old Men of the Sea
The Gentleman in Gray
Columbine

VI. COMPTON MACKENZIE

It would have been a much easier task for me to write about my religion if I could have invented a religion of my own to expound; but I am a Catholic, and a man might as well try to circumnavigate the globe in a paper boat as hope to circumscribe the Catholic faith within a thousand words.

Fortunately, however, the Catholic Church is not at the mercy of an individual apologist. Her dogmas rest upon something firmer than the shifting sands of scientific theories. In no Galilean cave will any enthusiastic young palæontologist find the skull of Jesus Christ, and thereby make it advisable for theologians to change the date of the Incarnation by a trifle of 20,000 years.

Let me hasten to add that I am not presuming to sneer at science. An obscurantist attitude to science is as repulsive as a smoking lamp. The more I devote my reason to the study of Nature and the less I surrender my emotion to the contemplation of art, the more firmly do I believe in what the curiously

feeble terminology of metaphysics calls the Absolute, and the more clearly do I perceive that only within the Catholic Church can I hope dimly to apprehend that Absolute.

It is encouraging, for instance, to read in Dr. Jeans' lecture[1] to the Royal Society on February 15, 1924, that our sun is situated fairly near the centre of the fifteen hundred million stars that make up the known universe.

After the scorn that has been expended on the

[1] Dr. Jeans' lecture was issued as a supplement to *Nature* of March 1st, 1924, and I beg all readers whose faith has been troubled by the contemplation of man's insignificance in the immensity of being to study this theory. I extract the following from an editorial comment in the same number:

"In the normal course of evolution of matter from gaseous nebula into single, double, or multiple stars, there is no room for a solar system such as ours, and all the evidence indicates that the majority of stars have come into being along the normal course. It follows that the solar system is an exception. Instead of the imagined countless millions of suns, each with its family of inhabited planets, which appeared so vividly to the imagination of our grandfathers, we are left with a universe in which there may be only one other system like ours. The thought is perhaps no less awe-inspiring than that which it displaces. Dr. Jeans is forced, chiefly by a process of exhaustion, to the conclusion that external influences are responsible for the existence of the planets which attend our sun, and those influences he finds might very well have arisen from the close approach of a star in the very remote past. The chances of such an approach are exceedingly small, and the inference again is that there are very few, if any, solar systems others than those produced by the encounter referred to."

folly of mediæval man in supposing that he was the centre of the universe and that his earth was something quite definitely extraordinary, the tidal theory of cosmogony advanced by Dr. Jeans restores some of my anthropocentric complacency. For the moment that theory seems unassailable; yet belief in it paradoxically requires an effort of faith in the improbable even more severe than the effort demanded for the improbable fact of the Incarnation. I am not trying to lighten the ship by flinging the cargo overboard, after the fashion of modernists, or broad Churchmen, or whatever they choose to call themselves. When the theories of science appear positively to conflict with the teachings of the Church I prefer to wait until the Church decides before I commit myself to accepting any theory, be it never so attractive.

Dear, wise Ray Lankester, communion with whose profound knowledge and beautiful common sense is one of the pleasures of contemporary existence, once told me that he could not understand how I had managed so completely to surrender my individual judgment as to profess Catholicism. It would be insincere to pretend that I cannot imagine a conflict between my reason and the authority of the Church. That may develop at any moment. All I

can affirm now is that my reason has not yet been called upon to struggle with my faith.

After all, the Church allows the individual mind a much greater liberty of speculation than is generally supposed. What she does not allow is any attempt by the individual to speculate for others. The classic instance of apparent fallibility is the condemnation of the Copernican system, but it must be remembered that it was really the astronomers of the time who were so urgent and unanimous in their defence of the Ptolemaic system. A parallel case at the present day would be to ask the Church to decide at once whether or not Dr. Jeans' tidal cosmogony has superseded the celestial mechanics of Laplace.

The strength of the chain is its weakest link, and the conservatism of the Church is continually being justified. Will any man of common sense who has studied the fragmentary history of mankind blame the caution of the Church in always being more ready to condemn than to approve? Let it be remembered that she has been equally slow to approve the novelties of the theological speculation. The theory of the Immaculate Conception [2] took over

---

[2] The Immaculate Conception does not mean, as countless people apparently think, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived by the Holy Ghost, but that from the first moment

eight hundred years to become a dogma, and though the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated as one of the major feasts, belief in it as an historical fact is still no more than a pious opinion.

To touch for a moment on the political aspect of Catholicism. We hear a great deal about the wickedness of the Church in the past, and our flesh is invited to creep at the thought of priestcraft. Well, a decent anti-clericalism is not unbecoming to a Catholic, and few of us are prepared to claim too much for the priesthood, which, it may be remarked, is only a small part of the Church.

No doubt in the Middle Ages the tyranny of the priests was dangerous and unpleasant. Yet I venture to think that the tyranny of lawyers, by which it was replaced, was equally dangerous and unpleasant, and I am not sure but that the tyranny of doctors with which we are now threatened will be the most dangerous and unpleasant of all. I am certainly prepared to maintain that the abuses of psycho-analysis already exceed by far the sum total of the abuses of the confessional, for which it is an inadequate and pretentious substitute.

I see no hope for the future of Western civiliza-

---

of her conception she was by the grace of Almighty God preserved from the taint of original sin.

tion unless it return to the political ideals of the Middle Ages. If I had not been a Papist before the War, I should have been driven into becoming one by the War. Alone the Church preserved her integrity during that mundane epilepsy. To my eyes, which many people might consider as ineffective as stained-glass windows for clarity of vision, the formation of the League of Nations is no better than a half-hearted compromise with the ideals of Catholicism—a typist's dream of the Holy Roman Empire, for politicians a new hypocrisy, for diplomats a sitting of addled eggs.

Had I the strength of mind to divorce myself entirely from the present, I might find my salvation in the study of mathematics, my worship in listening to the music of Bach, and my pleasure in reading the poetry of Lucretius. As it is, incapable of such a starry remoteness, I find in the Catholic faith that common humanity which fortifies me against the horrors of a twentieth-century existence. Did I possess the requisite credulity I might seek consolation and assurance in spiritualism, but my reason revolts less from a belief in the resurrection of the body than from a belief in ectoplasm; and if I had to fancy a postman's eternity for myself after death —an endless rat-tatting on easily manipulated

tables—I should prefer to be granted a certain faith in my ultimate obliteration.

All that humanity can believe, all that humanity can hope, all that humanity can love I find in Catholicism. Our minds have been so lately stunned by the noise of war that we do not yet apprehend what a much more tremendous spiritual contest is preparing. It may be that the historian of a thousand years hence will consider the creation of the Irish Free State a more imporant date than August, 1914, because Ireland may ultimately prove to be the first political expression of the finer civilisation that by the mercy of God shall emerge from that immense struggle already looming. It will be observed that hitherto I have not used the word Christianity in this article. That is because I believe that within a comparatively short time Catholicism and Christianity will once more mean the same thing. In that great spiritual struggle even an Ulsterman may have to beat his drum in honour of the Pope if he wants to drive Antichrist out of Ulster.

Putting on one side those intimations of Divinity that no man should be expected to proclaim thus casually as it were, I am a Christian because without Christianity I should be so much perplexed by the

riddle of life that I could not wait another moment to solve it. I am a Catholic because only in Catholicism does my sceptical mind perceive a rational exegesis and a practical synthesis of Christianity. If I have appeared bigoted and contentious, my bigotry and contentiousness must be forgiven because anybody who believes ardently is bound to disbelieve with equal ardour; and if I did not believe and disbelieve with a deep conviction that I was believing what was true and disbelieving what was false I should never have allowed my voice to be heard at this symposium of testimony.

[A correspondent of the *Daily Express* complained of my crackjaw words and highflown phrases. In these days of crossword puzzles he probably possesses a dictionary, the use of which I recommend.].

J. D. BERESFORD

WORKS BY J. D. BERESFORD

Jacob Stahl
The Hampdenshire Wonder
A Candidate for Truth
Goslings
The House in Demetrius Road
The Invisible Event
The Mountains of the Moon
These Lynnekers
House Mates
Nineteen Impressions
God's Counterpoint
The Jervaise Comedy
An Imperfect Mother
Revolution
Signs and Wonders
The Prisoners of Hartling
Love's Pilgrim
The Imperturbable Duchess
Unity
H. G. Wells (with Kenneth Richmond)
W. E. Ford
A Royal Heart (with the late Arthur Scott Craven)
The Compleat Angler (with Kenneth Richmond)
Howard and Son

VII. J. D. BERESFORD

THE changes in my own attitude to religion have followed generally, and in a condensed form, the broader movements of thought during the past century. I was brought up in a country rectory, and my father was a Low Churchman of the old school. In those years I believed in hell as firmly as I believed in God, or the wisdom of my own parents. I was, in short, a fair representative of the average churchgoer of the early and mid-Victorian period.

The first breath of doubt crossed my mind when I was just twenty-one, and so strong a breath was it that in a single evening I came over, as it were, into the scepticism of the later part of the nineteenth century begotten by the works of Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall. I reached, too, the same climax of absolute materialism; and then, like so many others, entered on another phase of reaction as a result of reading Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe,* in which matter was so triumphantly proved to possess all the potentialities hitherto attributed to God that it really

made little difference whether one believed in the God of matter or a material God.

The further stages that mark the subtler movements of thought cannot be followed in an article of this length. They include the examination and rejection of the phenomena of Spiritualism, so far as the evidence for actual messages from the dead is concerned; the opposition to modern occultist thought is that it omits an essential to development by too great a concentration on the self; and, last, a tendency to find in recent science strong support for the purely mystical attitude—inasmuch as the further our researches are pressed into the constitution of matter, the more we find it becoming resolved into an aspect of "force," which is merely a name for anything you please.

But though we may enlarge our conception of God to any extent—forsaking that early notion of Him as a kind of jealous patriarch and judge, extraordinarily quick-tempered where His own rules are concerned, and assuming Him as the essential spirit of the whole universe—we, the inhabitants of this one small planet, are compelled by the accident of our present condition to consider "religion" from the point of view of its influence on our day-to-day existence.

Now, whatever may be our conception of life after death—whether, indeed, we believe in it or not—the whole experience of mankind seems to show that the true practice of religion enforces before all else an element of self-denial. In all forms of the Christian religion this element is found in avoiding the temptation of what has been clearly defined for us as sin. In Hindu Buddhism, and occultism generally, the necessity for self-denial as a means to self-development is pushed to an extreme asceticism. But even in the most primitive of savage cults we find this root principle of denying ourselves something that we desire.

This, then, is what I have come to believe in as the meaning of religion as such; the element of faith as a means to the practice of self-restraint, since this is the common factor of all creeds.

From this it will be inferred that I do not disapprove the principles of Christianity. Nor do I. I regard the ethics of Christ as being beyond all comparison the most admirable rule of life ever given to the world; but I have never seen that ethic practised by the members of any Christian community with which I have been associated. Moreover, the dogmas of the Churches appear to me to be utterly at variance with the spirit of Christ. To take the

most obvious of many examples, I can find no warrant in Christ's teaching for the doctrine that a man shall find salvation only by following the particular articles of belief adopted by one particular sect or division of the Christian Church.

The clearest statement that Christ made in this connection was: "He that believeth on Me shall not perish." And I choose to accept that at once in its simplest and widest significance; not as implying, he that believes in an endless rigmarole of senseless ordinances and ritual originally imposed by priests for their own purposes; but as he that believes in the divine principle in himself and all mankind.

If we could, indeed, accept that single faith as the basis of a great world religion, all our controversies would be blown away, and the whole life of man would have to be re-organised. No matter in what creed I was educated, if I believe in this divine principle in myself and act always as if I so believe, I should be compelled to lead a "religious" life. To do anything less would be to deny my faith and relinquish the hope of eternal life.

But at the present stage of our evolution this one simple creed, with the enormous responsibilities and need for self-discipline that it necessitates, is a world too hard for the average man and woman. If we

could truly believe in God, not as a distant superhuman judge whom we must presently confront, but as inhabiting instantly and for ever our own mind, we should be incapable of acting unworthily. Every mean, selfish, cruel, cowardly, intolerant act would then be a denial of our great faith, and would indeed re-crucify that spirit of Christ which is still seeking to incarnate itself in all humanity.

This, then, in conclusion, is what religion means to me—the belief that God seeks to express Himself in us, not by a slavish adherence to some trifling form of worship, but by the practice of a principle which was incorporated by Christ in the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

But who, as yet, is capable of obeying that tremendous commandment—the essence of all true religious practice?

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

WORKS BY ISRAEL ZANGWILL

The Premier and the Painter
The Bachelors' Club
The Big Bow Mystery
The Old Maids' Club
Children of the Ghetto
Merely Mary Ann
Ghetto Tragedies
The King of Schnorrers
The Master
Without Prejudice
Dreamers of the Ghetto
The Mantle of Elijah
The Grey Wig
Blind Children
Ghetto Comedies
Italian Fantasies
The War for the World
The Principle of Nationalities
Chosen Peoples
Jinny the Carrier
The Voice of Jerusalem
Ibn Gabirol's Poems
Watchman, What of the Night?
Six Persons
The Moment Before
The Revolted Daughter
The Serio-Comic Governess
Nurse Marjorie
The Melting Pot
The War God
The Next Religion
Plaster Saints
Too Much Money
The Cockpit
The Forcing House
We Moderns

VIII. ISRAEL ZANGWILL

It is Sunday morning in the Temple. My "laundress," who has sacrificed to me her one morning of rest with a maternal devotion that recalls "the constant service of the ancient world," and proves that, despite Bolshevist organs, kind hearts may still beat beneath cheap blouses, has returned to the remote bosom of her family.

After a feverish week of wrestling with theatrical folk and business men, I am alone. The church bells are ringing, and though I was born a Jew and know that the original Templars, on the day they recaptured Jerusalem and the tomb of Christ in one of their crusades, slew every Jew—man, woman and child—I would willingly quit the work of writing this to sit in the Temple Church. But even as it is, the glorious music soars up to my tree-shadowed study, and I rejoice that, although the crowd will be standing to-night in long patient queues outside the film palaces of the Strand, noble buildings still exist wherein an ever-dwindling minority can hear the

inspired words of the ancient Jews in the almost equally-inspired Jacobean English.

And though I myself can rest no day at all these weeks, I am glad that this day of repose should have been given to the toiling masses through the medium of the Mosaic code, and while I would cut them off from no open-air recreation, I think that they, no less than their so-called betters, stand to lose by the abandonment of all ritual save that of the dance-hall and the night-club. I can forgive Wells much when I recall that in his *History of the World* he has done something, if far from everything, to put Isaiah and Amos in their places as the greatest factors in civilisation. It is true Bossuet had long ago made all history turn round the Jewish. But that was superstition, whereas Wells's view is provable.

"We moderns must be open," says the villain—or, as his already belated disciples would style him, the hero—of my latest play. But on religion, who to-day is open? Only those whose minds are closed—be they ultra-pietists or atheists. Both forms of extremist are brainless. But the immemorial instinct of mankind would justify the former rather than the latter. Though democracy has proved itself as despicable as aristocracy, there is still safety in numbers and tradition. "Orthodoxy" makes also

for happiness, and, with all my larger opportunities and means, my life has probably been less enviable than that of my penurious father, who in his old age left his home and family "to die in Jerusalem."

It is unfortunate, nevertheless, that the "orthodox" bear out the only truth that Oscar Wilde has contributed to thought—to wit, that "each man kills the thing he loves." I remember in my school days a boy pouncing on a contradiction in the Bible and at once disbelieving in the whole book. But of course the Bible is not a book. Because it is all bound together, a literature covering seven or eight centuries is mistaken for a single volume.

This is Christianity's fault. The only book the Bible resembles is an anthology; for this mixture of magnificence and myth was culled from the literature of Israel by an editorial board. The Old Testament is a "chosen" book more certainly than the Jews are a "chosen" people. There was no need for my friend Sir James Frazer to point out the savage elements of this book. They leap to the eye. The real need is to point out that, despite the later appendix called the New Testament, these savage elements still exist in Christendom, and never more brazenly than since "the war to end war" ended the peace of mankind.

It is now the common duty of all civilised men of every creed to find "The Next Religion," to quote the title of my still prohibited play of 1912. There is very little real difference among the higher creeds of to-day—even between such apparent opposites as Roman Catholicism and Judaism. What keeps them apart is largely the economic factor. Jesus, in that punning mood to which he (like the other ancient Hebrew prophets, of whom he was the latest and greatest example) was prone, told Peter he was founding his Church on a rock. The rock his Church is really founded on—as I remark in my "Italian Fantasies"—is a gold-reef. De-salarise the creeds and you will soon unify them.

But, of course, money, though it petrifies religion, is not its real source, and though it perpetuates the differences between religions, these differences are not insignificant. But in practice they are reduced or even eliminated by the common nature of Every-man Everywhere. The founders of religion are Supermen, and, as a character in one of my novels remarks, it is only by being misunderstood that a great man can influence his kind. We see this in the sudden acceptance of Bernard Shaw by the churchgoing classes, because of his "Saint Joan," and despite his unflinchingly analytical preface to

the text. To me he seemed from the first a sort of comic Christ.

Even before I had the privilege of his friendship I could see the love and pity behind the wilfully brazen boomster. But if he does not die in the odour of Sybil Thorndike's sanctity it will be because he subsequently read that little masterpiece *O'Flaherty, V. C.* on the wireless.

I, myself—though that alone is no proof of greatness—have been equally misunderstood. It takes two, you see, to make a truth, and though, by "marrying out of the fold," I tried to make it clear that to me Judaism was not racial, I failed to "get the idea over." Jewry thought I had made a "mixed marriage," a form of union I utterly disapprove of, the fact being that the Englishwoman who honoured me by becoming my wife was essentially at one with me.

But, as Pascal says, the heart has reasons of which the head is ignorant, and by some inarticulate instinct the Jewish masses the world over still believed in me as a racial Jew, and followed me (as they still insist on following me). I cannot complain since Jehovah himself was pictured by the pious as clad in praying shawl and phylacteries, and the same fate has overtaken Dr. Herzl, the founder

of modern Zionism, who often brought me his problems to this very room two decades before Lord Rothschild, Sir Herbert Samuel or Alfred Mond—who in those days might have been so useful—had discovered their passion for Palestine.

So little racial am I that I have not made my eldest-born "a son of the covenant." I cannot, with my vision and knowledge of history, carry on the nineteen-century-old tradition of trying to sit between two stools. Before the war a Maida Vale Jew offered to send a five-pound note to any charity I pleased if I would tell him if my son was circumcised. I was sorry to rob a charity, but I left the inquisitive letter unanswered. If the writer is still alive—as I hope—he can send the "fiver" to the Jewish refugees stranded by pitiless America's emigration policy. I will add—and he may perhaps rise to a "tenner" at the glad news—that my *younger* son *is* circumcised. But that was only because the doctor advised it. Circumcision has in fact become so popular a prophylactic that it can no longer connote the covenanted isolation of the Jew.

Were Jewry in earnest in fulfilling its vaunted mission it would rejoice at this removal of the greatest stumbling-block to the spread of its religion. I cannot too much admire those masses of Romans

who in the times of Tacitus and Juvenal were not deterred from Judaism even by a surgical operation in the pre-chloroform period. But in our day, if Judaism is ever to create the world of its millennial dream, it must perform a surgical operation on itself and cut away all that clogs and hinders its vitalising activity. It must recognise that Bryanism, like poor Bryan himself, is dead, and that the Old Testament is as far from finality as the New, which Judaism should now add to it.

What "The Next Religion" should be exactly, I have tried to answer in the spirit of Renan, who, in a preface to one of his plays, urged that only drama, giving through its personages even opposite answers, can give the full reply to any real human question. Simplicity in statement is possible only to journalists and politicians, themselves cunningly complex. Thus, doubly, the theatre may claim to replace the dying church.

I have been compelled to refer to my own books because, alone among the contributors to this series, unless dear old Conan Doyle's phantasies are to be reckoned a contribution to the subject, I seem not to have waited for editorial prompting to bare my heart on religion. Apart from my play, with that great word in its very title, I have dealt with the

subject in my book of verse *Blind Children,* and especially in my bulky book *The Voice of Jerusalem.* My very first sonnet—published when I was sixteen in an organ called *Society,* now extinct, like most of the papers I have been connected with—began:

The glamour of deceit is over all we prize,
E'en the stars that seem with love to glow
Are huge black worlds. The inward God-gleam dies,
And hearts shut up as flowers when sunlight flies.

And not many years later I published, in another extinct organ called *Progress,* a poem that still seems to me to sum up all that Shaw and Wells have said—and which had already been anticipated by John Stuart Mill—as to God's lack of omnipotence. Since then I at least have become less omniscient. A line in my murdered tragedy, *The War God:* "Have you experience then in making worlds?" seems worth pondering. At the end of my *Dreamers of the Ghetto* you may find a poem called "Jehovah," which still represents my views as well as a passionate outburst which must have anticipated Pragmatism. In a vast American anthology called *The World's Great Religious Poetry* (the bulk of which appears to have been written recently in America)

I am represented by three pieces, but the tiny quatrain in my *Blind Children* still seems to me to express a final truth:

Who armed us with the righteous meting-rod
By which our trust in heavenly love grows dim?
The fact that you and I despair of God
Is common ground for hope and trust in Him!

Wells and Shaw are modern Manichæans, but possibly the last word remains with the bold utterance of Isaiah: "I create Good and I create Evil; I am the Lord." But even this view of religion cannot blind us to the fact that life remains a tragi-comic mystery, and that a God without a sense of humour —as I was before Dean Inge in saying—would be to that extent our inferior. I agree with the hero of *The Next Religion* in his doctrine of "one world at a time," and in his view that if *we* fail to turn our planet into a Paradise, no power outside us will do it. I do not share the megalomaniac view of my friends Maeterlinck, Shaw or Wells, that we shall ever be able to steer our planet through space. As for Einstein's view of space, true or not, I regard it as "relatively" unimportant.

A future life is unthinkable, but not therefore impossible, and there are not a few people I should

love to see again or to atone to, though it seems pointless if they are transmogrified beyond recognition. As for the idea of "Back to Methuselah," although human life *is* extending, that can at best alter only the ratios. At 600 I feel I should have the same old foibles as I find in myself at sixty.

But if by science or otherwise we have the right to prolong life we have also the right to end it. War cannot have a monopoly of the right to kill. Peace must also have its lethal rights—under rigid safeguards, of course. But agonised incurables *must* be relieved of their agony.

In the famous conversation between George Eliot and F. W. H. Myers (who, though the founder of the Psychical Society, has failed deplorably to communicate with his followers), that great but now somewhat obscured Victorian authoress held forth Duty as all-sufficient for the spiritual life. I would rather phrase it that our guiding stars in the darkness of the infinite spaces should be not only Duty, but Loving-kindness, Pity and Courage.

I have always regretted that Arnold Bennett annexed the title *The Great Adventure* to an insignificant play, because that is the only phrase for the life of the universe and our own.

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

WORKS BY H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

The Bourgeois
Fanny Lambert
The Doctor
The Rapin
Patsy
Garryowen
Romance
Pierrot
Pierrette
Death The Knight and The Lady
The Crimson Azaleas
The Blue Lagoon
The Pools of Silence
The Drums of War
Poems and Ballads
The Ship of Coral
The Order of Release
The Street of the Flute Player
The Children of the Sea
Bird Cay
The Poems of François Villon (translated into English)
The New Optimism
The Blue Horizon
Poppyland
The Pearl Fishers
The North Sea and Other Poems
The Reef of Stars
The Life of François Villon
In Blue Waters
The Starlit Garden
The Willow Tree
The Man Who Lost Himself
Under Blue Skies
The Beach of Dreams
The Poems of Sappho (translated into English)
Men, Women and Beasts
Vanderdecken
The Garden of God

IX. H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

One morning a great many years ago the congregation of the Mariners' Church, which is in Kingstown, Ireland, had settled into their pews for the sermon. It was before I was born, but I can see them, in imagination, these Irish Protestant Victorians, the light streaming upon them through the tall, narrow windows, the silence broken by an occasional cough or the snap of a vinaigrette; the parson above them proceeding with his discourse; the children nudged to make them behave.

Suddenly a whisper ran through the church, passing from pew to pew, heads turned, a man stood up, and the congregation rising, stampeded, leaving the parson and his discourse literally in the air.

News had come that the Queen's yacht was in sight (it was Queen Victoria's second visit to Ireland), and these good people did not, I am sure, cast religion to the winds in their eagerness to sat-

isfy a consuming curiosity, but just convention—the same convention that took me as an unwilling child through the Sundays of many a long year to the same church, to sit bored through many a long sermon, unable to cut it short because no Queen's yacht was in sight.

Convention, I imagine, takes a good many people to church, but of this I am sure, that it takes all, or nearly all, children, for I cannot imagine a normal child washing itself and dressing itself in its best, and proceeding of its own free will to sit for an hour and a half in a stiff pew, listening to a service it can only partly understand; a service that enjoins it, among other things, to pray that it may be saved from the sin of coveting its neighbour's wife, of murder, and of adultery.

I am just talking out of my own experience. As a child the words "God," "religion," "church," "Sunday," "clergyman," all became related, and each expressive of something I did not care for, something to do with "form" and stiff collars, something I could not understand; something mirthless, limb-stiffening, and at times terrifying, as when they sang that frightful hymn which includes the lines:

Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around that second death!

I am not arguing against church-going for adults. I am only saying, in the course of these remarks, and saying with conviction, that the English Church service is not adapted for children, and that the taking of a child to church as a matter of convention, Sunday after Sunday, is not the surest way to induce in its mind the love of God—but, perhaps, the surest way to induce the fear of Him, as a rigid disciplinarian, a Person before Whom it is wicked to shuffle one's feet or smile, and Who may treat one not at all in a fatherly fashion.

The terrible threat of hell would have haunted my childhood, only for the fact that I did not consider it fully; I had other things to consider, including lessons and marbles and mackerel-fishing in Dublin Bay. Also, I had the feeling that the threat of eternal punishment for finite sins was a bogey put up to frighten me, not by God, but by my elders and betters.

In the course of many years I have not altered this opinion, substituting for elders and betters the heads of the Churches of the past, for in the course of these years I have seen the Church make a half-turn from the position it adopted towards the sinner when I was a child.

Hell is not preached to-day as it was in those days,

and, in consequence perhaps, the Church of convention has partly lost its hold upon the public, while at the same time the religion of fear has departed for many of us, and given place to a new religion which teaches us that, though a God surely exists, we can by no means visualise Him.

It is the attempt to depict God as a Person, a superior sort of clergyman with the attribute of a magistrate and a schoolmaster, a hanging judge and a loving Father, that I am sure has been accountable for a great deal of the growth of disbelief and the birth of the age of reason among ordinary men. Disbelief in the conventional creed of our forefathers, belief on lines more rational and understandable.

Belief in good and evil, belief that in clinging to good, as far as in us lies, is the best form of worship of the spirit of good; and in avoiding evil, as far as in us lies, the best means of fighting the spirit of evil.

I think very likely we who hold this simple faith are limited, even purblind; that there are men so much above us that they have the power to come into closer touch with the Great Spirit. I just speak for myself, and I am sure many like me, and when I call it a simple faith I do not mean that it is easy

of observance, for it implies in its recognition of good, not only good in its personal application, but in its application to others—the recognition, in fact, of the rights of man. This teaching is in the Bible, but in some extraordinary way it was never set free from the churches and conventicles till recent years, and then it was released, I suspect, not by the parsons, but the congregations, redeemed by education from the deadening clutch of formalism and creed.

The result has been almost unthinkable; on March 7, 1818, at the Lincolnshire Lent Assizes, his Majesty's judges and their sheriff, all pillars of the Church and State, murdered in cold blood, by hanging, twelve unfortunate men, guilty of thefts, or small offences, scarce worthy of a ten-shilling fine or a month's imprisonment.

In October, 1830, in Bedford Gaol, was murdered, by hanging, a boy, almost a child, for the act of putting a light to a hayrick. Two of a million facts that point to a recent past so terrible that, contrasted with the present, the mind is led to say: "Surely Christ has come to the world again."

Perhaps He has, I do not know, but of this I am assured, that the world of England to-day, despite its supposed irreligion and the "emptying of our

churches," is now more permeated than ever it has been by the spirit of clemency and justice, by the hatred of cruelty and oppression, and the determination, at all events among the masses, that there shall be equal rights for all men.

But we have still a long way to go.

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

WORKS BY HENRY ARTHUR JONES

A Clerical Error
Silver King
Saints and Sinners
Middleman
Judah
The Dancing Girl
Crusaders
The Bauble Shop
The Tempter
The Masqueraders
The Case of Rebellious Susan
The Triumph of the Philistines
Grace Mary
Michael and his Lost Angel
The Rogue's Comedy
The Physician
The Liars
The Goal
The Manœuvres of Jane
Carnac Sahib
The Lackey's Carnival
Mrs. Dane's Defence
The Princess's Nose
Chance, The Idol
Whitewashing Julia
What is Capital?
"Mr. Mayor of Shakespeare's Town"
Joseph Entangled
The Chevalier
The Heroic Stubbs
The Hypocrites
The Galilean's Victory
Dolly Reforming Herself
The Knife
We Can't Be As Bad As All That
Fall In Rookies
The Ogre
The Divine Gift
Mary Goes First
The Lie
Cock o' The Walk
The Pacifists
Renascence of the English Drama
Foundations of a National Drama
Theatre of Ideas
Shakespeare and Germany
Patriotism and Popular Education
My Dear Wells

X. HENRY ARTHUR JONES

I WAS brought up in the rigorous creed of English Puritanism. I am grateful for it, as I believe that Puritanism offers a firm basis for building up strong, solid and sincere character. I was forced to read and study the Bible constantly, and on this count also I acknowledge an immense debt to Puritanism. Those strange and beautiful and deeply human books have been my classics.

But I am equally grateful that I was able to make an early escape from Puritanism. Till I was twenty I accepted, almost without question, the creed that I had been taught. I had never been what my co-religionists called "converted," for there is no need in my nature for crude and luscious spiritual experience. I kept a hard belief in the cast-iron dogmas that had been hammered into my head all through my childhood.

The business I was engaged in allowed me long stretches of leisure, and I was a wide and diligent reader. Science and poetry I loved most, but I

read a good deal of fiction. No thoughtful man in those years could avoid being drawn into the currents of controversy between the new affirmations of science and the old affirmations of orthodox Christianity.

I eagerly examined the arguments on both sides, and was swayed towards Darwin, Huxley, and Mill. I carefully studied Herbert Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*. It has largely influenced my after thinking. Though philosophic thought has passed aside from Herbert Spencer, he remains a clear, solid thinker and a sure corrective to the wild, loose fallacies of Socialism.

I read the leading apologists of that day with a strong reaction of dissent. Newman I received gladly, with sensitive delight in the moulds of his language, with great admiration for his dialectic, with wonder to see this lofty, subtle intellect entangling itself in naïve incredulities, and with not a particle of agreement in his main positive conclusions.

But he who chiefly propped my mind and steered my course in those days was Matthew Arnold. I may gratefully dwell upon the memory of my close friend, the Reverend T. W. Chignell, the Unitarian minister at Exeter, a cousin of Mark Rutherford.

Although he had thrown away all dogma, his was one of the most religious minds that I have held in communion. Together we found great religious support in Matthew Arnold. If to-day I were asked for the clearest expression of my religious belief (so far as I have a belief that can be formulated) I should find it in that long, courageous song of Empedocles with its final note:

I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human effort scope,
But since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope.
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st
not then despair.

Arnold constantly sends out the loftiest and most invigorating religious strains and impulses. Those who are doubting and baffled may go to him for help. He will not offer them a hard, definite creed, but he will spiritually fortify them. He is not for those who seek an anodyne, but for those who need a tonic to brace them to endurance. Arnold is the surest and strongest and most fearless religious teacher of our time. We can lean upon him and face the darkness with him.

Tennyson and Browning never went through the

darkness. They saw the deep black cave that opened before mankind when orthodox Christianity shook and cracked under the assaults of science. They entered the cave of doubt, made extensive excursions in it, and came back reporting that on the whole it was better to abide safely on this side in the comfort of cheerful and spacious generalities. Matthew Arnold did go fearlessly right through the darkness and came out on the other side, strengthened and assured.

Since those years in the 'seventies, when to the best of my power I diligently searched into the truth of these things, I have never been able to accept the dogmas of orthodox Christianity. Not even to save my soul will I teach my tongue to say over forms of words that have no meaning to me. My mind offers a swift, instinctive repugnance to all statements of fact that I cannot analyse and understand.

Neither in religion, nor in politics, nor in art, will I bewilder and deceive myself by repeating formulas that I cannot break up into their constituent parts, so that I may reassemble them in an intelligible unity of thought before admitting them to a permanent place in the furniture of my mind.

It will be argued that the cardinal dogmas of

Christianity are matters of faith. But they are issued to me as definite statements of fact, and as such they are imposed upon believers. What moral impulse and quickening, what spiritual illumination and ardour, what assurance and consolation in this dim world, can I obtain by repeating statements of fact which merely baffle and puzzle me, and which I must not question, but must receive as matters of faith?

From my early manhood until a few years ago I called myself an Agnostic. I was never wholly sucked into the invading tide of materialistic thought that followed the publication of *The Origin of Species*. If in my struggle to gain firm land I swallowed much of its wash, I always managed to keep my eyes above its mountainous waves. Our civilisation to-day nourishes a large and increasing amount of hideous, coarse materialism, but there is, I think, a sensible decline in materialistic philosophy and affirmation.

Some fine and high-tuned souls have found a resting-place in Spiritualism. They have amassed an overwhelming amount of evidence that manifestations of a Power beyond our seeing do actually take place. Much of this evidence is questionable, some of it is incredible, but much of it has great weight, is difficult to discredit and impossible to disprove.

I am more curious about the scientific aspects of Spiritualism than about its religious aspects.

As a religion it does not satisfy my needs. I cannot develop a true religious feeling towards it. The future existence that it promises has no allurement to me. Without denying it or ridiculing it, I cannot find suitable accommodation for it in my scheme of things. I cannot make it fit into the macrocosm. Quite contentedly, I can absent myself from its extremely tenuous felicity, and linger here to commune with my earthly companions, and enjoy with them the light of the sun. While I have many absorbing tasks of present concern to fill my days, I push aside the business of investigating Spiritualism. I am far less concerned about what is going to happen to me in eternity than about what is going to happen to this country in the next ten or twenty years.

If the new heaven of Spiritualism is veritable scientific topography, I look back with affectionate memories to the vanished New Jerusalem of my childhood, with its spotless white raiment, and angels' waving wings, and harps of gold. "We don't get such fine weather as we used to get in the days of Charles the Second," Addison's old squire complained to his crony. I echo that we don't get such

fine solid mansions in the skies, Socialist and Spiritualist, as we used to get in the days of Good Queen Victoria.

My dear friend, Arthur Conan Doyle, to whose earnestness and truth-seeking crystal sincerity I pay the warmest tribute, will forgive me if I lag out of his company, immersed as I am in the affairs of this world that give me little respite to lay up for myself treasures in heaven.

Whatever call to wander in strangely haunted spheres of ether, or fields of asphodel, in new modes of being, amid new duties and new pleasures, whatever call to prolong and fulfil its existence my spirit may obey when it has earned its release from the flesh, it is to this earth that it turns and returns and passionately clings to-day; this earth, that is the mother of all that I know and feel; this earth, where I have lived and sinned and suffered and loved and fought and stumbled and triumphed and despaired and laughed and wept and eaten my fill and drunk deep draughts of pleasure and success and bitter cups of misery and defeat and shame; this earth, whose dawns and sunsets and variegated pageantries are nicely suited to my eyes and her harmonies and discords exactly tuned to my ears; this earth, whose biting winds and angry hailstorms have buffeted me,

but whose sunny skies and blue halcyon days have restored me—this very earth, the only place where my foot finds firm standing, and where my spirit feels itself at home.

Only in the degree that any promised or imagined Paradise offers to renew the conditions and experiences and activities of this present mortal life, and to restore its associations, does it win me to desire its hospitality, and then only as a last resort, a refuge from dissolution, a chilly exchange from this pleasing anxious being, this palpable breathing world where beating hearts make music to beating hearts, and where love and friendship clasp no shadows, but warm human flesh and blood. Still I will snatch as much as I can from annihilation, and I shall find no Paradise intolerable if Arthur Conan Doyle is there on its threshold to welcome me.

Meantime, I have had no slightest personal revelation of anything outside the everyday course of events, nor am I inquisitive to communicate with loved ones who have gone from me. I am disinclined to invoke agencies that claim a power to bridge the gulf that separates me from the dead. I would rather imagine them to be at rest, and not vexed about the happenings of this world. It would give me no happiness to know that I was certain to

receive a spirit communication to-night—rather, I should feel uneasiness and discomfort. I am content to hold communion in my own soul with their memories who have been my dearest earthly companions. But I will accept all authentic evidence of their continued existence that is offered directly to my own senses and that I can subject to proof. I will not go out of my way to seek it.

What, then, is my religion to-day? What positive, definite creed have I wherewith to fortify and cheer myself, and light my feet in my few remaining years as I go down to the nobility of death? Descending to the shadows, have I any encouraging words to call back to them who are following me down that same beaten path?

It is only in late years that we have learned from science that each of us lives, not as we supposed, in a tenement of clay, but in a tenement of electrons. Matter has been resolved into force. But this force is everywhere intelligent, foreseeing, orderly, directory, purposeful in its manifestations, whether it majestically swings our earth round the sun in a mathematically calculated orbit, whether it supervises the fall of a sparrow, or whether, with the same unerring precision, it commands the infinitesimal rings of movement in every atom.

But is this force not blind and malignant when it hurts, or punishes, or destroys me? No. I must not ascribe to it my purposes and my preferences. Whether the tiny phagocyte expels the poison from my blood and saves me, or whether the deadly microbe instils the poison and kills me, there is alike purpose and intelligence directing their microscopic activities. How can I call that "design" which shapes and animates the clumsy work of man, and not call that "design" which shapes and animates the infinitely perfect forms and movements in every cranny of this universe? How can I call that "spirit" which inhabits my flesh and directs my movements, and not call that "spirit" which inhabits this universal frame of things and directs its movements?

However we may name this Pervading Force, however we may imagine or apprehend it, we cannot, without abolishing our conceptions of design and intelligence, nay, without abolishing the very words themselves, deny that design and intelligence are the Creators, the Sustainers, and the Sovereign Dictators of this universe. It is impossible to acknowledge that there is "design" in any part or section of this universe, in any work of man or of Nature, and then to rail off that section as an oasis and a preserve from chaos. If design and intelligence

operate anywhere and in anything, then they must necessarily operate everywhere and in all things, from the march of the stars to the finest rhythm of the smallest atom.

Is that determinism? In defiance of it, I instinctively assert my free will because I am conscious of exercising my free will. I cannot, dare not, abdicate my responsibility. If I try to escape from it, conscience and remorse stand ready to arrest me. Whence come these "compunctious visitings," as Lady Macbeth calls them, if not from the Power beyond our seeing that with design and intelligence compels the universe? Is there a paradox here? There is a dilemma. How can I escape from it?

I will perform an act of faith because I have no alternative. I will trust this Power that is beyond my comprehending. Unless I perform this act of faith, I cannot steadfastly and courageously continue my earthly pilgrimage. I am justified, because I am thereby helped and strengthened, and made equal with my fate. This act of faith is wholly different from the mechanical repetition of a form of words which I cannot understand, which it is sought to impose upon me as an act of faith, but which is indeed nothing more than an emission

of sounds from the tongue, a placebo like the comforting pronouncement of the blessed word "Mesopotamia."

We cannot comprehend this intangible Power. It is not stuff that our senses can handle and dissect. I do not understand what is meant by a Personal God. The phrase brings me up against a blank wall. So far as I can understand what is meant by it, it seems to me a contradiction in terms. When it is used, I recall the Psalmist's rebuke: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee." We cannot comprehend that Power, but it insists that we shall apprehend it. Matter has been resolved into force, and every manifestation of that force shows arrangement, design, intelligence. Force, Power, Spirit—we are using large indefinite synonyms—are they not all the same, the only reality, the ultimate reality, out of which all things are spun, our own bodies as well as every other compound of electrons?

I believe that all this vast universe is living intelligent Spirit in its every tiniest atom. I believe that we can rest in its faithfulness and punctuality. It is not a lying Spirit. It is a truthful and honest Spirit. Facing and accepting all the angriest convulsions and hurricanes of that universal Spirit; fac-

ing and accepting all the woes and disasters and diseases and brutalities and blinding sorrows that it visits upon us; facing and accepting all the torments of the flesh and agonies of the mind that man endures, I believe there is yet a great balance of sentient happiness and joy and beauty: and, interpenetrating the Cosmos to its utmost limit, I discern an infrangible law compelling all its atoms in one long march of unity and order of purpose to secure that balance of happiness and joy and beauty.

When Wordsworth declared that every flower enjoyed the air it breathed, he was not using a poet's license, but stating a scientific fact. May we not divine intrinsic spirit in those dust-grains of the clods of the field which seeds of wheat shall intelligently clasp, and shall endow with vegetable life, and that, having been garnered and become food-stuff, shall next be intelligently drawn into my blood, and thence shall be intelligently appointed to the chief office in my brain, there to burn with love and adoration? Is there spirit in me, and not in that grain of dust which is qualifying itself to become the noblest part of me?

In what obscurest nook or recess of matter, in what rock, or plant, or animal, or man, shall we search and shall not find there the home of the

living spirit that men call God? "Thou hast beset me behind and before. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell behold Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me and Thy right hand shall guide me." How the old words fit our mouths and lift our hearts to-day, if we do not basely put them to literal use, if we do not harden them into dead, benumbing, incredible statements of fact.

It is the fate of all creeds ultimately to petrify religion. The letter strangles the spirit. Let us not submit ourselves to the despotism of dead forms of words. Equally, having thrown off the fetters of dogma, let us not ignobly seek refuge in amiable generalities and vasty vagueness, and that balmy optimism which is equally meaningless with the dogmas that we have rejected.

Thus I am led, in the company of many of the deepest and devoutest minds of all times, to Pantheism, to that large, simple faith which finds poetic expression in Paul's words to the Athenians: "He giveth to all, life and breath and all things, that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel

after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from any one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being." My creed is not a full, rich, seductive creed like Roman Catholicism, embroidered with golden legends, and spangled and painted with gorgeous imageries. It is a narrow plank, but I find it sure under my feet. I tread onwards with no misgiving.

I pray to that living universal Spirit, not expecting it to work miracles for me, not to command, scarcely to beseech, but that I may be drawn into aspiring communion with that Power whose abundant life gave me life and gives me more life, whose inexhaustible strength gives me new strength, that I may keep perfect step and tune with its laws, and that I may thereby gain increased faith, courage, patience, hope and self-control. My prayers do not fall into the void, for I rise refreshed, invigorated and assured.

I am not distressed about immortality. I cannot clearly enough picture to myself any future state of being that will be so different from this present state that I feel obliged to make special preparation and do extra packing for it. My ordinary, everyday spiritual luggage will suffice me to carry me through the journey, however long it may be. I

am not building upon immortality, but I will joyfully receive it if it is conferred upon me.

Such is my religion. Is it meagre? Is it chilly? Is it pagan? Is it a religion at all? It is true for me. It is enough for me. I can live by it. At seventy-four I can face death without a fear. I do indeed shrink from a wearisome dying, the drawn-out pain, the trouble and inconvenience to myself and to those that wait to see me pass. But of death itself I have not the least dread.

Let me not say a word in rebuke to them whose habit or nature demands a vast architectural scheme of dogma and incomprehensibility. The operative part of any man's religion is that which he weaves for himself out of his own spiritual experience.

. . . The Unseen Power whose eye
For ever doth accompany mankind
Hath looked on no religion scornfully
Which man did ever find,
Which hath not taught weak wills how much they can,
Which hath not fall'n on the heart like rain,
Which hath not said to sunk self-weary man
"Thou must be born again."

We cannot rest in a materialistic interpretation of the universe. The last creed that I can accept is

that which affirms the spirit of man to be a transitory emanation from dead matter, and, resolving it back into dead matter, accuses the universe of being a huge trick organised by futility and nothingness to delude and defeat mankind. We refuse to deify futility and nothingness. The spirit of man will always throw up to Heaven its triumphant affirmation, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

"THE UNKNOWN MAN"

XI. "THE UNKNOWN MAN"

It has been a real inspiration and joy to read the articles by well-known writers on their religious beliefs which are included in *My Religion*. I think Mr. Walpole is correct when he says: "If you were to question nine out of ten grown men and women of to-day as to their religious experience they would describe to you an evolution through three stages of discovery. First the child's acceptance of the dogmas handed over to it by its elders, second the adolescent's reaction against that acceptance, and third the evolution of some positive personal opinion born of personal experience." I have quoted these words of Mr. Walpole because they do exactly sum up my own experience—an experience which has brought me back to the Christ and to Christianity through a period of bewildering doubt and agnosticism.

What Mr. Arnold Bennett does not seem to realise is that many of us have gambled the whole of our lives on the side of religion with no more of an

intellectual certainty than he exhibits. That is to say, on the balance of probability to accept belief in a mind behind the universe which is working out a purpose for good in and through that universe. On the same balance of probability to accept the theory of a future life and the likelihood that our conduct in this life will materially affect the nature of it. To see in the Christ one whose moral standard is the highest mankind has ever reached, and one who understood better than anyone else the secret of happiness.

But that is only a starting point. There is all the difference in the world between Mr. Arnold Bennett's position and the position of countless folk to-day who, with no more intellectual certainty than that, have decided to risk out the whole of their lives on the chances that that is true.

From my earliest thinking days of doubt and agnosticism I was convinced of this one thing—that if there *is* a God at work in the Universe, Whose purpose is good, and if man can come into communion with Him and consciously co-operate with Him, then our life here in this queer and often sad world is indeed infinitely worth while. I soon found, as Mr. Arnold Bennett truly says, that my brain was utterly unequal to the sublime problem, but I

also found that I had a power of spiritual insight latent within me, which seemed to be super-rational, above and beyond reason.

While recognizing that our religion must be reasonable and not an insult to our intelligence, I at the same time discovered within me a spiritual insight, a "second life," as Mr. Walpole calls it, reaching out beyond the gropings of my little brain and giving me a sense of awe and a desire to worship Him with whom I felt myself to be in contact.

The gambling instinct, so often perverted and used for unworthy ends, is one of the most valuable instincts possessed by man, and nowhere does it find a truer or more complete outlet and fulfilment than in religion. As Donald Hankey once said to us, writing from the trenches in France, "Religion is betting your life there is a God." I decided to bet my life that there is a God, and more and more as the years go by I find that in so far as I yield up my will to God, and open my heart to His in-dwelling, in so far as I try to live out my everyday life in the Christ spirit, *the experiment works!* Peace and serenity come to the soul and harmony and balance to conflicting instincts. It seems to me that by one road or another we are all coming back to the Christ, not so much the Christ of dogma and ritual but to

a "layman's Christ," the Christ of Galilee and Gethsemane. What does He stand for to us lay folk who try to follow Him, not only in His relationship with other people but also in His relationship with the All-Father?

To me the Christ stands for the mystery of God in man, the Divine spark in humanity, perfectly shown forth in Him, but possessed in some measure by all mankind. He stands for the fact that all life is sacramental—the spiritual showing itself in and through the material. He stands for our fundamental need of communion with the Father, of quiet spaces in our lives when our spiritual consciousness can grow and develop. The still small Voice is so often drowned in all the vulgar noise and bustle of our modern hurrying life. Jesus went apart on to the hill-tops to pray, He withdrew Himself for periods of quiet communion with the Father, and each one of us can prove for ourselves how life can be transformed and enriched beyond all description, if only we will do the same.

Above all, however, it is the Christ who makes it possible for us to face the hard and apparently cruel places in life without despair and hopelessness. Behind all the crude and terrible theories of the Atonement which still haunt us in many well-known hymns,

I believe there is eternal truth. The truth that life comes through death, through sacrifice and self-giving; the truth of Christ's eternal paradox: "He who would save his life shall lose it, and he who would lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." That is to say, "whoever lives for himself alone never really lives at all, while he who gives his life away for others discovers the secret of true living." Through the perfect "at-one-ment" of God and man in the Christ, all humanity is lifted nearer to the Divine and freed from its bondage to the material. If all this is true, then the God of Nature is not so different after all from the God revealed to us by Christ. In Nature we see all life feeding upon other life, all creatures giving their lives that others may live.

In Nature this is involuntary, but man has been given the awful responsibility of being free to choose in some measure whether his life shall be lived for the sake of his own little self, or for the sake of God and his fellow-men. God saw no other way for free-willed human beings to find and fulfil themselves than the way of hardship, struggle and difficulty. The saints have told us over and over again that the two most paralysing failings of our human nature are sloth and pride.

If we are honest with ourselves, we all know that as soon as things become easy and soft for us, or as soon as we become successful and popular, we deteriorate. But because God is Love He could not stand aside and look on at this struggling and striving of humanity; so full of suffering, bewilderment and apparent defeat; and so He came, and still comes, to share the fight and the suffering with us. The workman labouring day by day in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth is the eternal symbol of God in us. The figure hanging dying on the Tree, with arms outstretched to all the world, is the eternal symbol of the wondrous fact that there is a Cross in the heart of God and that the Way of the Cross is the Way of Life because it is the Way of Love.

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Mr. Arnold Bennett's chapter, which begins this book, defined his position in a number of negatives; he does not believe in any actual dogma of the Churches, and he includes immortality of the soul in his disbelief. One cannot but admire the unflinching mental honesty of his declaration and also the absence of any bitterness towards those whose views may differ from his own. But he is all negative, and I would put it to him that man cannot live on negatives alone. He must have some positive guidance and assurance if he is to have a tranquil heart in the presence of those mists which drape him in, and that worldly extinction which is the only absolutely certain thing in his future. A man may run for a time, possibly for a lifetime, upon that which he has learned when young, as a motor may run onwards when the engine has been shut off, but some motive power somewhere is needed if he is not to relapse into the animal. I have a great

sympathy with Bennett's position. It was my own until I learned that Agnosticism is not a terminus, but only a junction where you change on to another line, leaving your packet of faith behind, but picking up a packet of fact in exchange. The same evolution may well occur to the quick brain and enquiring mind of Arnold Bennett. He says, after giving his views, "Further than this I do not go, cannot go, and do not wish to go." I cannot take those last words seriously. If those of us who have gone further have found peace and happiness in doing so, surely he would not deliberately refuse such comfort. I trust the day may come when he will look into these psychic matters, not superficially but with that thoroughness which they deserve and need. Then a strong new prophet may arise in Israel.

Mr. Hugh Walpole followed Mr. Arnold Bennett. His chapter was also distinguished for an earnest broadmindedness, but he was not so positive in his negatives as Mr. Arnold Bennett. He was unorthodox, but in gentler and vaguer fashion. One general remark he made which was true and worth preserving. He said that most of us went through three clear stages of religious thought, that of the religion of childhood, that of the reaction which brings disillusion and negation, and finally that of

the philosophy which we find for ourselves. That was a helpful generalisation, and indeed its working is apparent in the case of each of these writers, with the exception of the Roman Catholic. Personally I do not think that it would be true of a Spiritualist, because a belief which is reasoned from facts cannot be radically altered. My own children have, of course, been brought up as Spiritualists, and I should be very surprised to learn that they have ever to traverse those deserts of doubt which their father trod before them. Beyond the impression of a kindly philosophic mind I do not see that Mr. Walpole is in a position to bring help to anyone else.

The same may be said of Miss Rebecca West. Her mind is broad and tolerant. She admires the cold virtue of the Puritan, and she admires the sensuous but beautiful ritual of the Catholic. She has sympathy for all—which is right and beautiful. But when a traveller seeks a path and the whole horizon is indicated it does not help him forward upon his journey. If the whole horizon is beautiful that may please the spectator, but we are travellers, not spectators, and we want some sure guidance among the tangle of paths which lead in many directions, and one or other of which we must take. Therefore I find Miss West's admirable charity to

be useless as a guide to the race. I happen to know, however, that Miss West has brushed, however slightly, the edge of positive psychic experiment, and when she has gone further down this path she may find that which will concentrate and clarify her views.

Mr. Oppenheim is kindly and vague; so also is Mr. de Vere Stacpoole. But there is nothing positive, nothing that one can get a grip of in the views of either of them. They are both gentlemen of the world, who have seen much of life, who have recognised that everywhere in humanity one finds nobility as well as baseness, and that all creeds have their sinners as well as their saints. Both shrink, as nearly every one of the writers does, from the dogmatism of the Churches. One helpful remark is made by Stacpoole, that as the rigidity of the Churches has declined, and as their power has waned, mankind has perceptibly improved, and that the criminal law of 1825 would shock the conscience of 1925. This is a demonstrable truth, and it would seem to prove that from one cause or another the individual has developed in his moral sense. On the other hand, when one reflects that never has materialism been so rife, never has there been such a disaster as the Great War, and never has there been

such utter chaos in the morality of a nation as is now evident in Russia, one cannot claim that the whole world shares the advance. After all, the criminal laws of England were peculiar to England and were the most barbarous in Europe, just as the present divorce laws of England are the least enlightened of any civilised nation. In the year 2025 people will point to their reform as a proof of the progress which that century has effected.

Mr. Compton Mackenzie declares himself an orthodox Catholic, who has remained firm in the religion of his childhood. Well, it must have saved him many mental struggles and many hours of sadness, but whether it has aided that spiritual development which is the true object of life only his future experience can show. If he has felt no overpowering impulse to change, then it is clear that he could do no other than to stand fast where he is and enjoy those consolations, true or false, which his Church undoubtedly does give. I would remind him, however, that he is not yet out of the wood, even in this world. Father Tyrrell clung fast to the Church, but he used his own judgment, and excommunication awaited him in the end. Sir George Mivart also, almost alone among scientific men, clung long to the Church, but the hour of parting came. Still, if it

makes him happy and is for his spiritual good, I hope Mr. Mackenzie will long remain in those peaceful waters, and reconcile his reason to doctrines which have repelled so many earnest minds.

But there are points in his argument which show a strange want of proportion. He talks of the tyranny of the mediæval Church being as no more dangerous or unpleasant than the subsequent tyranny of lawyers and finally of doctors. What sort of talk is this! It was the mediæval Church which instituted the Inquisition, not as a secret thing, but as a recognised official branch, with the patronage of popes and all high dignitaries. This Holy Office, as it was blasphemously called, lasted for centuries, and during that time it murdered in very cold blood, by torture and by fire, many tens of thousands of people whose only crime was that they were earnest in religious matters and aspired to other and, as they thought, higher teaching than the Church gave them. How could so horrible an institution, the details of which cannot be read without disgust, compare with any hold which modern lawyers or doctors have had upon the earth? Perhaps he may say that this was an old story. It is not such an old story. It was Napoleon the First who released many of these victims, and it carried over in South America

up to our own day. But the Church's own axiom is that before a sin is forgiven we must have confession and contrition. I have never heard of confession or contrition of the Church as regards the Inquisition.

Then again Compton Mackenzie says, "My reason revolts less from a belief in the resurrection of the body than from a belief in ectoplasm, and if I had to fancy a postman's eternity for myself after death —an endless rat-tat on easily manipulated tables— I should prefer a certain faith in my ultimate obliteration."

Mr. Mackenzie does not seem to realise that what he may prefer or what he may not prefer has really no bearing upon the matter. The great laws of Nature, and their evidence as recorded by careful observers, take no heed of individual preferences. If his Church will allow him to read psychic books —and I understand that psychic research is not yet interdicted—he will find in Crawford, Richet, Schwenck, Notzing and others ample evidence as to the existence of ectoplasm, and he will understand that raps are a very small portion of our psychic experience. If he can muster an equal amount of evidence for the resurrection of the physical body— of course we are all agreed as to the spiritual one—

then he should let the world know those facts upon which he founds his faith. These sneers at Spiritualism are simply the measure of his own ignorance.

Equally ignorant is my friend Mr. Zangwill, a big-brained and big-hearted man, whose real philanthropic work is often covered by a needless cloak of levity. He is an earnest man, and he cries, as so many cry, "It is now the common duty of all civilised men of every creed to find 'The Next Religion.'" The idea that we, the ridiculed Spiritualists, may have found it, has never entered his head. He refers to my "fantasies," and I suppose he attaches my name to them because I happen to be the one Spiritualist among his own private acquaintances. If he considers this philosophy to be some personal fad of my own he would be right to attach limited importance to it. But when he knows, as he should know, that so many of the greatest brains of the world, scientific men of the first repute, eminent statesmen, men whose opinion must have weight with any audience, have examined this matter carefully and have finally declared that the evidence is overpowering, then it is surely an example of that unhappy levity of which I have spoken, that he who has not made the most elementary examination should declare the subject to

be a fantasy. It is a particularly unhappy word to choose for the only system of religious thought which is based not on faith or imagination but on experiment and on fact.

There remains the kindly pantheistic article of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. I have angled for Mr. Jones. I have dropped tempting pamphlets before his nose, but he has not touched my bait. And yet his kindly references to our subject show that my work has not been lost. The reason why I have tried to help him—and succeeded perhaps in worrying him—is that I have an affection for him, and that I can conceive of no greater gift from one man to another than that which I wished to bestow upon him. He says, in a most generous passage, that he will find no paradise intolerable if I am on its threshold to welcome him. I told him in my answering letter that I could not presume that I should be at the rendezvous, but that I had no doubts at all about him.

I have long looked upon Henry Arthur Jones as one of the very first—if not the very first—prose writers that we possess. He has that rare gift of rhythm which marks the great artist. For this alone his article would be memorable. Take such a passage as this:

"Whatever call to wander in strangely haunted

spheres of ether, or fields of asphodel, in new modes of being, amid new duties and new pleasures, whatever call to prolong and fulfil its existence my spirit may obey when it has earned its release from the flesh, it is to this earth that it turns and returns and passionately clings to-day; this earth, that is the mother of all that I know and feel; this earth, where I have lived and sinned and suffered and loved and fought and stumbled and triumphed and despaired and laughed and wept and eaten my fill and drunk deep draughts of pleasure and success and bitter cups of misery and defeat and shame; this earth, whose dawns and sunsets and variegated pageantries are nicely suited to my eyes and her harmonies and discords exactly tuned to my ears; this earth, whose biting winds and angry hailstorms have buffeted me, but whose sunny skies and blue halcyon days have restored me—this very earth, the only place where my foot finds firm standing, and where my spirit feels itself at home." There are few living men who can write such prose as that.

Now in summing up these chapters—I shall deal with my own one presently—what is the prevailing characteristic? It is a curious one. It is that they are quite divorced from Christian dogma, and yet that they are all in close sympathy with the Chris-

tian spirit. It might almost be expressed by the aphorism, "The less dogma the more Christ." That is the clear line of thought which has suggested itself to nearly every one of these writers, and it represents, I think and hope, the general trend of the world. It is full of hope for us, for we cannot write our noble and epoch-making message upon a slate which is already covered with ancient and discredited inscriptions. There are to my mind just two things needed for the religion for the future, the Christ spirit and direct Spirit Communion The latter will give us that ever widening knowledge which will meet and satisfy the ever-growing demand of the evolving human brain.

And now I turn to my own modest contribution. I wish the task had been placed in more capable hands. I do assure you that I never go forth to meet such things, but if they come to me they take the form of a challenge, and I cannot pass them by. I was asked to testify, and I have done so to the best of my ability.

I have traced here my own foundation in Catholicism. I have shown what it was which loosened my roots in that ancient soil, and how naturally the Arnold Bennett negative position came to me. Then came a long course of psychic study and experi-

ment, until I was placed in the position that I should have been an intellectual sloven and a moral coward if I did not accept conclusions which were so plain.

In my chapter I describe my own upbringing in the Roman Catholic Church, my revolt against doctrines and dogmas which are common to all Christianity but which seemed to me to be unreasonable, untrue, and in some ways pernicious. There followed my complete severance from Christianity but never from deism, which is a gospel written across the whole heaven and earth, carrying conviction to any brain which can appreciate the order and wonder of the Universe. I was never so bemused as to accept the Haeckel doctrine that "laws" were responsible for this, since laws require a wise maker just as much as the more material things do. Then I described how gradually I became interested in psychic reading and experiment, and how for many years I explored that line of thought until in the war time full proof and conviction came upon me, together with an overpowering sense of the vital importance of this knowledge to mankind in their present stage of materialism and honest bewilderment. I saw that the weathercock of fate could be dispensed with and the fixed signpost of fact placed in its stead. I perceived how trivial the phe-

nomena were and what tremendous issues lay behind them, the tapping of an immense hidden reservoir of knowledge, the only source from which a fresh and sure inspiration could be obtained.

I summed our gains up as follows: "It is not merely the reunion with our lost ones which has been effected. Something much higher has been obtained. We have got into contact with virtuous souls long passed over who now correspond to what were called angels. From them we get direct religious teaching founded upon actual experience. It is in many ways a new conception, and yet it has come through to us in many lands and through many instruments. It is simple. It is reasonable. Above all, it is extraordinarily comforting.

"When once you are convinced of its truth this world holds no terror for you, and you look into the future unafraid, with no fear of death. It tells us of a really merciful God, whose rewards are immense, and whose judgments are mild; of a new world which contains that work and those pleasures which are most congenial to us, of a gradual evolution from lowly paradise to the higher ones, of the development of our own natural faculties, of homes and family circles and the reunion of all who love, even of the lowly animal world, with the

exclusion of all who jar. Such is the life beyond as pictured by those who live it."

I pointed out that such a line of thought does not refute essential Christianity, though certainly in my own case it has taught me to regard Christ from the point of view of example rather than of atonement, since, speaking for myself alone, I could not reconcile the latter with my sense of justice. I had lost all faith in Christ because I had been asked to believe incredible things of Him. Now I had a new view of the whole matter which Spirit teaching had given me, and I expressed my position thus:

"But the wonderful thing is that by devious paths we have got back to Christianity once more, and that the Christ figure appears—to me at least—more beautiful and understandable than ever. The worst that any sect can do for Christ is to make Him incredible. Now He appeared as a great heaven-sent teacher living a life which was to be our example. That was surely enough without any question of a mystical atonement.

"It is not for our mosquito brains to say what degree of divinity was in Him, but we can surely say that He was nearer the divine than we, and that His teaching is the most beautiful of which we have cognisance. So in a circle we have come back to

Him—the great, kindly, brooding Spirit who yearns over the world which is His special care. He has ceased to be a miracle. He has become our dear friend and brother."

Such in short is my present position. I quarrel with no other man's interpretation of the Universe. I am willing to allow that Buddha, Moses or Mahomet may adequately fill in another man's scheme the place which Christ holds in mine. It is essential that our Spiritualism should be world-wide and that we should realise that there are many paths up the hill. All is well if we can only meet at the top.

But surely it is manifest that some great change is needed. Can anyone dispute that proposition? All these orthodox people who give their views in their comments upon the articles overlook the fact that official Christianity has had the world in its keeping for nearly 1,500 years. Surely that is a long trial. And what is the result? It is deeply divided in itself, its teachers point in contradictory directions, both the thinking classes and the working classes are largely alienated, materialism is vastly increased, and, finally, as a proof how inoperative has been the religion of Peace, we have ten million men lying dead upon the ground, and every nation

now is planning how best to poison its neighbour in wars to come. What further trials do we await before we are prepared to admit that something is wanting and that this something must be found?

We have come forward and we say that we have found the missing essential of religion. We say that it consists in communion with those who are higher than ourselves and learning from their supermundane wisdom. It is an old remedy but it is one which has been neglected. In ancient days they talked of angels and prophets and thence they got their teaching. If we call an angel a high spirit and a prophet a pure medium, then we realise that history does indeed repeat itself. They come to us, these shining ones, with a message which is clear, definite, practical, reasonable and beautiful. They discard nothing that is of value. They add much which is essential. They make God more understandable, Christ more lovable, punishment more merciful. Heaven more desirable, our own fate infinitely more hopeful, and death less to be dreaded. These are the gifts which we bring to the human race. From the day that they are universally accepted the dark ages will be left behind and we shall advance with our faces turned to an ever waxing light.

THE DILEMMA OF CHRISTIANITY

THE DILEMMA OF CHRISTIANITY

By ARNOLD BENNETT

In the chapter which opened the present discussion of religious beliefs I referred to the demonstrable fact that Christianity had for centuries "notoriously forgotten the teaching of its own founder." We have had, I think, a painful illustration of this forgetfulness in the reception of my article by certain sections of the Christian Church and organisation—and especially by Nonconformity and the Anglican Press.

I must, indeed, say a word about methods of controversy. Let me take as an example the method of Dr. Norwood, of the City Temple. Dr. Norwood seems to me to be merely rude, angry, and inaccurate. He accuses me of an inconsistency which is not to be found in my article. He calls me "cock-a-hoop." He refers to me as "one who has taken little interest in religion." I was ready to agree that Jesus was the greatest man that ever lived. Dr. Norwood fulminating in the security of

a pulpit, cries: "His pat on the back to Jesus is offensive." Further, I am "devoid of moral dynamics." Further, Dr. Norwood is "willing to back Dante against five hundred novelists." And so on.

It is pitiable that Dr. Norwood has not realised that the day for this kind of dialectics about Christianity has gone by and will never return. All the finest type of Christians are aware that dogmatic Christianity is now desperately on the defensive, and that dialectics in the manner of Dr. Norwood render it the very worst possible service.

The religious Press comes out of the argument less creditably even than Dr. Norwood. Take a periodical called the *Church Times*. The *Church Times* describes my article as part of a "stunt." It describes it as "a crude expression of cock-sure unbelief." It describes it as "insolent." It censures the bishops for commenting on it. It says that I have a "genius for securing publicity."

To all which, my reply is that I absolutely decline to carry on any controversy on this plane. The one answer to such deplorable performances as those of Dr. Norwood and the Anglican Press is silence. I point out their spirit and leave the thing there.

On the other hand, the seven bishops of the Church of England who commented on my article

show an admirable spirit of kindliness, tolerance, and caution. It is refreshing and reassuring to find in the responsible leaders of Christianity in this country a spirit which so evidently regrets the extravagances of Christian apologetics in the past and realises the grave dangers besetting the Christian faith in the present.

I would like particularly to express my appreciation of the letter of the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury. If during the last fifty years the defenders of the faith had displayed more of the spirit which animates that letter, Christianity would scarcely be in the very difficult position in which it stands to-day.

If I had to animadvert upon the attitude of some of the bishops I might possibly demur to the gratuitous assumption that I have no, or very insufficient, knowledge of what I have been talking about. There is a type of man, familiar to all of us, who, when we put before him a problem which has been seriously exercising us for a long period, blandly exclaims: "My dear fellow, if you will only just *think* a moment——" I do not say that any of the bishops go as far as this, but some of them faintly remind me of the type.

Let me add, in the way of criticism, that some of

the bishops appear not to know what Christian dogma is, in fact, being taught in 1925. In my article I wrote of the "extraordinary and too convenient notion that a man may do as he chooses provided he dies in a certain faith." Some of the bishops deny that such a tenet is held by any Christian. For myself, I was brought up in the dogma that a deathbed repentance and a sincere declaration of Christian belief would secure heaven for the vilest sinner. And beyond doubt this doctrine is still being preached in hundreds of pulpits.

The most remarkable thing about the apologia of the bishops is their anxiety to simplify dogma and their extreme caution in defending it. The Bishop of London writes: "The only dogma about it [Christianity] is a beautiful conviction that this God of Nature and God of conscience appeared in human flesh 'in the fulness of time,' after a long preparation of mankind for the great event."

The Bishop of Ely writes: "For me, Christian 'dogma' means that God, who at sundry times and in divers manners has revealed His infinite love for mankind, as the crowning proof of that love sent His Son to take upon Him our nature and to show us, in terms that we can understand, what God is like and what man can become."

What a tremendous, drastic pruning of the plant of Christian dogma is here! Contrast the dogma of to-day, as officially stated, with the dogma of only forty years ago, when I used to sit for examinations in Christian evidence. The doctrinal position of the bishops to-day would have rendered them liable to excommunication forty years ago. Bit by bit, article by article, all has gone, save one thing: the doctrine that Christ was a direct emissary of the Almighty and therefore divine in a sense in which no other man born of woman is divine.

Yet what is forty years in the sight of the Almighty? If what was held true forty years ago was divinely inspired, then it should be held true to-day—all of it. How comes it that so many things that were regarded as essential forty years ago can to-day be abandoned as "inessential" and "unimportant"? And is there any reason why the process of lopping the tree should stop at the point which it has now reached? The process has been continuous. Is it ended? Is it improbable that the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Ely of forty years hence will be limiting Christian dogma to the assertion that Christ was divine in the sense in which we are all divine, but to a greater degree?

The elements of the dilemma of dogmatic Christianity can be stated simply:

Dogmatic Christianity is based on the Bible, and on the Bible alone. And the Bible has proved to be very unsure ground for dogma, as it was bound to prove as soon as the bias of religious tradition was eliminated from the study of it. The Bible is not a book. It is, as somebody recently very well described it, an anthology. As a whole, it is a body of great literary value and of much moral value. The best books in it are, perhaps, supreme in their kind. But of the divine origin of any of these books no proof (in my opinion) has yet been brought forward which reaches the standard of demonstration demanded by historical students in secular fields of inquiry.

The history of the selection of the anthology, that is to say, of the establishment of the canon, is so sinister that Christian apologists seldom dare even to refer to it. The Bible has been riddled through and through by historical and other criticism, which has never been satisfactorily answered. Questions of translation and of the distance of time separating the records from the events recorded strike at the roots of credence. There is scarcely a passage in it upon whose interpretation all Chris-

tians are agreed: and there are many upon whose interpretations tens of thousands of Christians have quarrelled to the point of killing one another. Again, many passages have been frankly abandoned as unhistorical.

Who among us has the authority to decide dogmatically what in the Bible is historical and what unhistorical? I confine myself to saying (1) that I have discovered nothing in the Bible to convince me of the divine origin of Christian doctrine as inculcated either to-day or fourteen hundred years ago; and (2) that the number of people in my case has been rapidly increasing for many decades and is still increasing.

For Christ's moral teaching I have already expressed the very highest admiration.

THE LAST WORD

THE LAST WORD

By THE BISHOP OF LONDON

I SUPPOSE it is the old habit of answering questions in Victoria Park during my time in East London which makes it impossible for me to "sit down" under assertions which will be read by thousands and which may be thought true if left unanswered.

I have no time or space except to allude to the last chapter of Mr. Arnold Bennett, and in that to three of his assertions, all of which, if he will forgive my saying so, are entirely untrue.

1. The first is that *"Christianity is based on the Bible, and the Bible alone."*

Then what about the Church? What about the one really successful thing in this world which is winning adherents every day of every colour and in every clime throughout the world? Surely Mr. Bennett must have read Bishop Westcott's famous book, *The Bible in the Church,* and has seen the

part which Bishop Westcott, with all his learning, assigns to the living Church of believers in determining the Canon of Holy Scripture.

It was again an equally great man, Dean Church, who said that the Church flows through human history as the Gulf Stream flows through the cold ocean, and although it is perfectly true that in the Church of England we may not teach anything as being *essential to eternal salvation* except that which has been proved by certain warrant of Holy Scripture, and it may be said that "the Church to teach and the Bible to prove" is the motto of that Church, yet it would be most untrue to ignore the witness of the "Holy Church throughout all the world," which, as I shall show in a moment, is far more agreed than Mr. Bennett would allow.

2. But then comes the even more astonishing statement that *"the Bible has been riddled through and through by historical and other criticism."*

I wonder whether this book will penetrate to Asia Minor. If so, my friend Sir William Ramsay, whom I saw off on his way there a few months ago, will be smiling when he reads the copy which contains such a statement.

No doubt a reader like Mr. Bennett has read Sir William Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire*

and *St. Paul the Traveller,* and will know that he is dealing with one of the greatest archæologists of modern times. I can remember well when those books appeared more than twenty-five years ago, and the help they were to me in dealing with my secularist opponents, always to me as courteous as Mr. Arnold Bennett himself. Here was a man—not a parson—who went to Asia Minor imagining that the Acts of the Apostles was a second century document, and, after years of study of the inscriptions he found there, coming back to tell the world in those entrancing volumes that the "Travel Document" which makes up the greater part of the Acts of the Apostles was the best authority *existing in the world* on the state of the *Roman Empire in the first century.*

So much for modern discovery having riddled the Bible through and through. But this is, of course, only one illustration of the immense debt we owe to modern science and historical research for our understanding of the Bible.

In reading through a good many of the articles which have been written on "My Religion" one cannot help feeling that many of the writers were brought up in their youth under very unintelligent teaching about the Bible.

No one imagines now that it was intended to teach us science; modern criticism has shown us how mistaken we were (not the Bible itself) about the dates of many of the books; we are able now to distinguish between legend and history, between figurative and literal statements, and instead of such criticism, riddling the Bible through and through, it has *immensely added to its charm and interest.*

I should like to recommend to my readers such a cheap and interesting book as Mr. Anthony Deane's *How to Enjoy the Bible.* It is well worth reading.

3. But then we get to the most amazing statement of all: *"There is scarcely a passage in it on whose interpretation all Christians are agreed."*

As one who has taken rather a leading part in the effort to re-unite Christendom, I am sure that it will comfort Mr. Bennett to know that the surprising thing we find is that the points on which Christians are agreed outnumber, ten to one, those on which they differ.

I had two years' conferences with the Wesleyan ministers and laymen at London House, and they would all bear me out when I say that our differences were on matters of Church order, or the

importance to be attached to this or that Church ordinance, rather than on the essential truths of the Christian religion, such as the Incarnation, Atonement, and the Truth of the Holy Trinity.

Similarly, when I had staying in my house for a visit this summer the patriarchs and metropolitans of the Eastern Church, there was no difference whatever in the importance we attached to the great doctrines of the Christian Church. Again, hopeless for the moment as any reunion with the Roman Church seems to be, we would all, in the Church of England, be the first to acknowledge the magnificent witness throughout the world to the Being of God, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the reality of Sacramental Grace which the Roman Church has borne. It was Mr. Gladstone who said (I quote from memory), "I bow my head before the great truths common to all Christians, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity."

But while I feel bound to point out these facts in opposition to Mr. Bennett's statements, let me say that we feel grateful to men like himself who have written so freely of their religious ideas, which they so often keep to themselves.

I would only say in conclusion (for the arrival of thirty ordination candidates this afternoon brings my time to a close) that on the whole discussion three things strike me:

1. That this vague Pantheism which seems the religion of so many of the authors has no power to save souls. It was said of an eloquent preacher once "that there was not enough gospel in his sermons to save a tom-tit."

These authors live in a world of fiction: we ministers of the Gospel do our work in a world of stern fact. We have to mend broken lives and feed starving souls. I think if the author of *Broken Earthenware* had been asked to write one of the articles he would have told a different tale.

We want, and the modern world wants, some evidence that God has *done* something to help it, and it is this belief that He *has* done something, and something effectual, which has gone to the heart of the world. When Gandhi can stand up before 15,000 Bengalis and make his sole speech one sentence: "I owe, and India owes, more than can be expressed to One Who never set His foot in it, and that is Jesus Christ," we are seeing the dawn of a belief in the East that vague Pantheism is not enough.

2. The second remark I would make is that if the Light *has* shone it will be the Light *which will judge us and not we the Light.*

I often think of that remark of the doorkeeper to the supercilious visitor who had just come out of a gallery of masterpieces in Florence: "I don't think much of these masterpieces," he said to the doorkeeper. *"These pictures, sir, are not on their trial; it is the spectators who are on their trial,"* and it is just as well for us bishops, as well as popular novelists, to remember that "the word which we have heard—the same shall judge us at the last day."

3. And the last thing I would emphasise—as I tried to express in my letter on Mr. Bennett's first article—is *the fallacy of expecting the effect of Christianity to survive Christianity itself.* What produced in the world this "Gospel of Kindness" in which all these writers say they believe? Historically nothing whatever but a *belief in the New Testament as a record of fact.*

A witty judge once said to me: "There are some people who are trying to have the grin without the cat." But even in *Alice in Wonderland* the grin gradually vanished.

Let the efforts now being made to undermine

the belief of the young in historical Christianity really succeed, and, although the effect which it has produced in the world may survive for a time, we have no sort of guarantee that it will continue for long to regulate the unruly passions of mankind.

APPENDIX

CORRESPONDENCE

APPENDIX

CORRESPONDENCE

FROM THE BISHOP OF SALISBURY

To the Editor

SIR,—As I read Mr. Arnold Bennett's article on "What I Believe" I was impressed once again by a familiar phenomenon. Mr. Bennett is typical of a class. There are many who, like him, value the ethics and spirit of Christianity, but deny the origin of it all.

Mr. Bennett has, presumably, had the advantage of being born in a Christian land—in a land where the dogmas of Christianity, which he dislikes so much, have been steadily taught for 1,400 years or so. He may think little of them, but in point of fact he is himself saturated through and through by the atmosphere they have created, and he probably owes to Christianity far more than he acknowledges or knows. He admits, indeed, that the Christian virtues, many of which he mentions, are the only basis of an enduring religion, and I do not doubt that he practises them in his own life.

This seems to be a very common attitude of mind. Men admire the fruit, but ignore the root; they appreciate the effect, but they ignore the cause. Yet the phenomena of Christianity, whether in history or experience, demand an explanation, and few will deny—notwithstanding the facile assumptions of Mr. Bennett and his circle of friends—that Christianity is a living force to-day.

What is behind it? What is the motive force behind the amazing output of beneficence which stands in the name of Christianity? What is the secret of the fruitful labour of the life-long sacrifice of many Christians? Why not believe what these devoted people say of themselves—that they owe all to a living Person who is ever present with them to cleanse and inspire and guide?

St. Clair Sarum.

FROM THE BISHOP OF LINCOLN

To the Editor

Sir,—We owe so much to Mr. Arnold Bennett as novelist and playwright that we are naturally interested to know what he believes with regard to the deeper things of human life. It seems to me that Mr. Bennett believes more than he thinks he does, and I suspect that his belief, faint though it

be, has a more direct influence on his daily actions than he is aware. He is certainly inclined to believe that God is, and thinks a future life more probable than not.

What may be the attributes of God and His ultimate aim he declares that he knows not. He, however, immediately deduces from the fact of conscience that the aim of God in the creation and slow evolution of His universe is a moral aim. Here the believing Christian will be in entire accord with him. I may add also that I do not know any intelligent Christian who would question his rejection of what he calls the "convenient notion" that a man may do as he chooses provided he dies in a certain faith.

I should have thought that such a rejection was a commonplace of Christian ethical teaching. Where I find myself most directly at issue with Mr. Arnold Bennett is with regard to his estimate of the value of what we may know about God, and with regard to his judgment as to the relationship between a man's life and what he really believes. We are denizens of a very wonderful and very mysterious world.

The wisest of men is the most ready to confess that what we know is slight as compared with the vast unknown. Yet what we know is worth while. We live by it and prove it in life. Meanwhile the universe challenges us, and we ever seek to penetrate further into its mystery, and in this adventure

we live. So we know little of God, but I submit that we may know something. God reveals himself in Nature, in man, and in our own deeper consciousness.

But such knowledge as I have I live, I prove it in life; it makes life, and the system of things of which I find myself a part, in some measure intelligible to me and bearable by me. And it is in this adventure of the soul I live.

I find it difficult also to accept Mr. Bennett's disparagement of dogma. Dogma, after all, is what a man believes. He need hold his belief none the less securely because countless others have held it with him, and have lived and died by it and in it. Mr. Bennett admits, "I do not believe that a man can think evil and do good." I agree, but herein is expressed the case for dogma. If God is, God is the ultimate reality.

It seems to me it must matter immeasurably what a man believes about the Ultimate Reality, whether, for instance, he sincerely believes that back of all, and beyond all, there is an Eternal Lovingkindness, or whether he believes that beyond all there is a blind and unknown Force.

Mr. Bennett has raised, I need hardly say, far more questions than I can attempt to deal with in this brief communication.

W. S. Lincoln.

FROM THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER

To the Editor

Sir,—I have been asked to express my opinion on Mr. Arnold Bennett's statement of "What I Believe," and I think that the best course I can pursue is to state shortly and clearly what I believe Christianity teaches. I notice that Mr. Arnold Bennett has quite made up his mind that Christianity is not true, although he does not show much knowledge of what its teaching really is, nor give any signs of having investigated the question of its truth.

I would venture to say in reply that as the result of investigations carried on for many years I am convinced on historical grounds of the truth of Christianity, and feel that it gives a more satisfying explanation of the facts of the universe than any creed I am acquainted with.

The fundamental tenet of Christianity is the revelation of God through Jesus Christ. Man cannot of himself know about God, though he may be able to understand some of His workings. Therefore Jesus, the Son of God, became man that He might reveal to mankind the true nature of God and the true destiny of man. These are complementary truths depending one on the other.

Mr. Arnold Bennett is prepared to accept the

Christian morality, or what he considers to be such, but he does not see that that morality is meaningless unless the structure of the world harmonises with it. A man to accept the Christian moral code must be convinced that the world is such as to make that code real.

The revelation in Christ teaches us, then, the nature of God. It not only teaches us, but it exhibits to us God in human form so that we can understand it. It tells us that God is a God of order, and righteousness, and love, and if God be a God of love—if love is one of His eternal attributes—then the Godhead cannot be a solitary person, for love demands a subject and an object. So while the doctrine of the Incarnation shows to us how God is revealed to man, the doctrine of the Trinity shows us how love is part of the essence and nature of God.

And the death of Jesus on the Cross for mankind reveals to us also how that self-sacrifice, which in mankind is the highest exhibition of human love, is something fundamental to the universe, for it is part of the nature of God Himself. So a believing Christian, when he is faced by the realities of the world, as put before us, for example, in the Great War, is not bewildered. He thinks that the war has come through the lusts of mankind; he feels the pathos of it; but through the horror of the war he sees the continuous exhibition of human self-sacrifice, and recognises that, while it arises from

the failure of men, it reveals mankind's highest qualities.

And as Christ revealed to us the nature of God, so He reveals to us the duty of the destiny of man.

Mr. Arnold Bennett approves of the Christian morality, but I do not think that he grasps it in its completeness. He makes it a religion of kindliness. That seems to present it as something weak and almost sentimental. Of course the Christian should be kindly, but he is much more than that. God is a God of righteousness, and self-restraint and sacrifice, as well as of love, and man's life must exhibit all these qualities.

Mr. Arnold Bennett does not believe in heaven and hell, but he tells us: "On a balance of probabilities I am inclined to accept the theory of a future life; and I am fairly sure that, if indeed there is a future life, my conduct in this present life will materially affect the nature of it." I think that really he puts in these words the sum of what is meant by the belief in heaven and hell.

He objects again to a religion of faith. But almost immediately afterwards he tells us, "I think that every act counts, forever, either for or against the ultimate fulfilment of happiness. I might say every thought as well as every act." But if he recognises this he recognises everything that is implied in faith. Faith means the acceptance of a relation of Christ, and therefore the full realisation of what men should do and the spirit in which they should

do it. It means that acts by themselves, if they do not spring from a right motive, are not good, and the motive is love—the love of man and the love of God. Faith without works is bad, but works without faith are not good works at all.

And then, finally, Christianity responds to all the highest religious aspirations of the human soul, for it puts before us a God who is love; it puts before us the loftiest possible ideal of life, and presents God to us incarnate in Christ, living and dying for man and so responding to all our affections and hopes and aspirations.

It presents to us an adequate guide for conduct, an adequate explanation of the reality of things, and an adequate object of worship.

A. C. Gloucester.

The Palace, Gloucester.

FROM THE BISHOP OF ST. EDMUNDSBURY AND IPSWICH

To the Editor

Sir,—It hardly seems necessary for another episcopal voice to be added to those which have with so much sympathy endorsed the line of conduct which Mr. Arnold Bennett advocated as being indeed of the very essence of Christian life. To try to pursue that line of conduct, the line which seems to him so right,

is indeed a matter of supreme importance. It is in regard to the dogmatic background and the motives which give this line its force that differences of opinion exist.

I think, perhaps, it may be worth pointing out that religious thought throughout the ages has been a process of development. In the course of that development, particular doctrines have from time to time been advocated, as though they were of the essence of Christianity and, perhaps, its most important feature, which nevertheless have proved to be mistaken, or imperfect, and to need supplementing by many other considerations. Stated by themselves, they are sometimes strictly untrue and even a travesty of Christianity. So much of the criticism of Christian dogma to-day is concerned with these matters which are not material or are even contradictory to the central truth.

In the course of religious history human nature has really won great central spiritual truths, which it is pure loss to disregard. It is surely not the line of a wise man to cut himself off from this great stream of thought, but rather to try to build upon it and to do what many of us are trying to do to-day —to re-interpret those truths in the light of the great accession of knowledge which our own generation has won.

There is another aspect of religion which is worth stating. The Christian creed is not only a matter of thought; it conceives that it has laid hold of a

secret of power. The inner man is not only mind; he includes those thoughts, aspirations, emotions and acts of will which assure us that we have a nature which is spiritual.

The secret of life is to be found in the conscious response that comes to us from the great spirit—God. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has arrived at this conviction largely through the strength of his natural affections and the losses which many of us shared in the war.

There is a more direct approach to the spirit world. It is by looking for, and presently becoming conscious of, Him who is the Fount of spiritual as well as physical life.

It would manifestly be absurd to say that no one can do the things which Christ approves unless he is consciously in communion with Him. The lives of many good men show that that is not so; but that there is available for those who look for it a Spirit that will guide into truth, and a Power that will mould their wills and their character I, for my part, can find no room to question.

It is, however, well for us to remember that "in my Father's house (household) are many abiding places," and some may have their niche there whose Christianity we fail to recognise.

W. G. St. Edm. and Ipswich.

The Bishop's House, Ipswich.

FROM THE BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

To the Editor

Sir,—Mr. Arnold Bennett is right in claiming that he shares his beliefs with a large number of people. I have many friends who believe as he does, and they seem to me, as he tells us that a few Christian friends of his seem to him, to possess real intelligence.

But what I always feel about them is that they have not brought their intelligence to bear upon religion with the same thoroughness that they use in their other thinking. They all object to dogma. They argue, as he does, that such Christian virtues as kindliness, forgiveness, and humility can be effective without it. I should certainly agree that there have been, and are, and will be, many individuals who naturally prefer kindly acts, and perform as many of them as they can, but are not interested in dogma or even religion.

What that generally means is that they have not considered it worth while to think out the reason why they and others prefer and perform these acts. There are some people who do not find it enough to ascribe this preference to a universal conscience, which comes from God, about Whom nothing further can be known.

I have never understood why the belief (or, may I say the dogma?) that the attributes and aims of

God are unknowable should be regarded as a mark of superior intelligence. Christianity is a way of life and cannot be fairly judged by any who are not trying it. But it is also a system of thought, very imperfectly expressed in dogma.

That God lives and works in men, inspiring (whether they are aware of it or not) their wisdom, their achievement, their "natural" goodness, demonstrating by His supreme act of sacrifice that love is the highest power in the world, bidding them work with Him in this power to finish His creation, and promising higher wisdom, greater achievement, and purer goodness to all who realise and respond to His love—all this is, if you will, an hypothesis. We believe it to be revealed truth. But, in any case, it deserves more serious consideration than many of our trained minds are giving it. So examined it might possibly prove to be as reasonable a guide to the attributes of God and His relationship with men as the "argument from design" is to His existence.

ALBERT LIVERPOOL.

FROM DR. NORWOOD

To the Editor

Sir,—Mr. Arnold Bennett puts himself in a position which makes a rejoinder by an ordinary Christian somewhat difficult. He says, "I do not believe,

and never have at any time believed, in the divinity of Christ, heaven, hell, the immortality of the soul, the divine inspiration of the Bible."

"The Christian dogma," he adds, "does not enter into my social, spiritual, or intellectual life at all. Nor does the dogma of any other religion." So commonplace are these denials, that he and his friends "very rarely trouble to repeat them, much less argue about them."

Plainly there would not be sufficient standing ground for argument as between him and the Christian. One is impressed of course by the airy wave of the hand with which he dismisses such trifles. I could imagine that if he had taken the same attitude towards, say, wireless telegraphy, Marconi might have appealed to him in vain.

His statement that he does not believe, and never has at any time believed, in "the immortality of the soul" is difficult to reconcile with his later statement that "on a balance of probabilities I am inclined to accept the theory of a future life." Apparently this cock-a-hoop attitude involves some dangers to consistency.

He is to be congratulated that among so many negations he has such an abundant belief in conscience. He has found it to be "a force which tends always in the direction of justice, mercy and kindness." And this to him is the strongest argument for the existence of God. Some of us have an equally strong belief in conscience, but we had not

noticed that invariably it tended in the direction of mercy and kindness. We thought it required some instruction before that beautiful result could be secured. We would have credited Robespierre or Lenin with a conscience, but had overlooked its resultant mercy and kindness.

Mr. Bennett has discovered a type of Christian it has not been my fortune to meet yet, though I have heard of him when on occasion I have listened to Hyde Park oratory. I mean the man who has the "extraordinary and too convenient notion that he may safely do as he chooses provided he dies in a certain faith." For one who has taken so little interest in religion he has been fortunate in his discoveries. More serious students of the subject seem to miss these rare specimens.

Considering Mr. Bennett's final and confident faith in the supremacy of the law of kindliness; his conviction that everything else will fail; his heartfelt admission that Christ fulfilled this law perfectly, and "in the field of morals was the greatest man that ever lived"; might it not be possible that even such a word as "divinity" would repay a little more thought?

F. W. Norwood.

The City Temple, London.

FROM THE BISHOP OF LONDON

To the Editor

Sir,—You have kindly invited me to comment upon any of these articles on "My Religion," and I would rather comment on the one sent from Mr. Arnold Bennett, as I know him personally, and I know that he will not resent anything that I may say.

What strikes me at once is that his premises really carry him further than he allows himself to go. For instance, he feels strongly the "argument from design," and still more strongly the "argument from conscience," but both these arguments, if admitted, carry us a very long way. A form of letters cannot throw itself into a play of Shakespeare, because there is a "mark of mind" in the play. The atoms of the universe cannot have thrown themselves into the ordered universe, because there is clearly a "mark of mind" in that play also, and not only of a mind, but of a beneficent mind.

The beauty of Nature has never been explained yet, except on the hypothesis that it is the result of a beautiful Mind, which meant to plan a pleasant home for those who were to be created. The fact that animals feed upon one another does not disprove this, for every naturalist will tell us that the animal creation is a happy one. Moreover, we ourselves are not necessarily depraved because we eat mutton chops. But, as Mr. Bennett sees so clearly,

the fact of the existence of conscience carries us much further. It gives a *character* to the possessor of the mind. As Dr. Chalmers, the great Scotch preacher, once said: "Would God have put a *reclaiming witness against Himself* in the breast of everyone if He was not righteous? That insistent voice which says 'You ought,' 'You must,' can only come from Someone who is Himself good."

But it is perfectly true that, if left at this point without further guidance, we might be without that "kindliness" for which Mr. Bennett pleads, and for which St. Paul pleaded many years ago when he said: "Without charity we are *nothing*."

And here, of course, it is that Christianity comes in. You can call it *dogmatic* Christianity if you like, but the only dogma about it is a beautiful conviction that this God of Nature and God of conscience appeared in human flesh, "in the fulness of time," after a long preparation of mankind for the great event.

And, not only so, but that He still lives on, "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," and that we may have daily communion with Him by prayer and sacrament.

Historically it has been that belief which has furnished the spirit of charity which Mr. Bennett evidently breathes himself, and which he rightly demands in others, but in disowning historic Christianity he is really (quite unconsciously, no doubt) kicking down the ladder which has brought him so

far. I feel sure that if he had as much to do with those face to face with death, or struggling with temptations which almost overwhelmed them, as we who are in the ministry have daily to do, he would feel the need of this further revelation of the character and power and love of God which Christianity teaches.

A. F. London.

FROM THE BISHOP OF ELY

To the Editor

Sir,—The article on which you invite my comment would require a treatise or series of treatises if a full answer were to be supplied. I hope Mr. Arnold Bennett will not think me impertinent if I suggest that his faith goes much deeper than he cares to acknowledge. He is "agnostic," in the liberal and inoffensive sense, as to the future life, and yet admits that if there is such a life his conduct in this life will materially affect the nature of it. He is not "agnostic" as to the existence of a Creator with a clear aim for His Creation; the argument "from design" and the universality of conscience provide this conviction. And he is at one upon the worthlessness of religion without love or "kindliness."

He accepts the moral teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and quotes some of His practical injunctions.

And all would agree with him in acknowledging that if Christians had in the past and in the present lived up to the standard of their religion the Church would be in a very different position.

But is he not bound by his own admissions to go a step farther? If he accepts the teaching of Jesus Christ as to the Brotherhood of man, can he reject His teaching as to the Fatherhood of God and the revelation of the nature and purpose of the Father in the person of the Incarnate Son? Can he really doubt what the aim of the Creator is for His children, when Jesus Christ and His followers proclaim that God is love and that he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him?

Mr. Bennett believes that Jesus Christ understood the secret of happiness better than anyone. But does He not define happiness as perfect union with the Father, such as He Himself enjoyed and which we can share with Him, through the Spirit?

Is it not really theological definitions rather than "dogma" which he repudiates? For me, "Christian dogma" means that God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners has revealed His infinite love for mankind, as the crowning proof of that love, sent His Son to take upon Him our nature, and to show us, in terms that we can understand, what God is like and what man can become.

And I find the secret of happiness in the forgiveness of sin, which otherwise wrecks my happiness, and in the hope that some day, somewhere, I—even I

—may by His grace, become something like my Saviour and my God, Who is the impersonation of that love which is Mr. Bennett's ideal.

LEONARD ELY.

FROM BISHOP WELLDON, DEAN OF DURHAM

To the Editor

Sir,—Mr. Arnold Bennett, if I may judge him by his article, seems to be a rather lax Theist. He is, I am afraid, too, a rather loose thinker upon religion. I am at a loss to understand why he goes as far as he does go and then stops dead.

Like other Theists he rests his belief upon "the scientifically ordered and law-controlled" character of the universe. But why should he not, like other Theists, seek to derive from the universe some conception of the nature and purpose of the First Cause or Supreme Being whom he calls God? He says also that he believes in conscience. But does not the human conscience suggest to him that the Creator of the conscience must Himself be a moral Being? Are there no inferences which flow from the morality of such a Being? And if there is a moral Power governing the universe, does not man stand in some relation, and does he not owe a certain duty to that Power?

Mr. Arnold Bennett says he has never believed in

heaven or hell or the immortality of the soul; but he adds that he is "inclined to accept the theory of a future life." Is it not then reasonable that he should order his present life in accordance with that belief?

After all, the doctrine, "Thou God seest me," has been and still is a strong motive to righteousness. It was Pascal who said that all life depended upon the answer to the question whether the soul were immortal or not. Mr. Arnold Bennett need not wait for certainty upon these high topics. It is enough that he should arrive at the best judgment possible to him upon them, and should act in conformity with that judgment.

Mr. Arnold Bennett repudiates the doctrine of Christ's divinity. He holds, indeed, that "Christ, better than anybody, understood the secret of happiness." But nobody who reads the Gospels can doubt that the secret of happiness according to our Lord's teaching, was relative to God, and to the future life. After all, our Lord's moral teaching was a part, but only a part, of His Gospel. Does Mr. Bennett believe His word when He declared that He was free from sin, that He could pardon the sins of all men, that He could give rest to all the weary and heavy-laden souls on earth, and that at the last He would come again to be the Judge of all the living and the dead?

If he does not believe these sayings of our Lord, what is his theory of our Lord's Person as revealed in the Gospels? But if he does believe them, do

they not imply a belief in our Lord's super-human Being, *i.e.*, in His Divinity?

A thoughtful man cannot, I hold, reasonably abstain from forming some estimate of our Lord's Nature, of His relation to God, of His miracles, and of the origin of His Church. I repeat that Mr. Arnold Bennett is not bound to know these things, but is, I think, bound by his own conscience to form some judgment upon them. The very word "creed" denotes not knowledge but belief, and he who can say, "I believe," has entered into the sanctuary of religion.

Let me add that Mr. Arnold Bennett makes a mistake if he thinks the Church of Christ regards salvation as dependent not upon conduct but upon belief. In our Lord's great parable of the Final Judgment it is they who have done good that enter into eternal felicity and they who have done evil that are subject to eternal retribution.

I can feel no doubt that Jesus Christ still holds in His pierced hands the key to the mystery of human life. I do not wish to encumber His religion with superfluous obligations, whether of practice or of belief; but I feel able and willing to trust that they who seek faithfully to live in the spirit of His moral law, which Mr. Arnold Bennett so unreservedly approves, will at the last receive His abiding benediction.

J. E. C. WELLDON.

The Deanery, Durham.

FROM DR. DINSDALE T. YOUNG

To the Editor

Sir,—It is no sign of superior intelligence to deny the orthodox Christian creed. I observe that some who do deny it beg the question by talking of "thinking" and "culture" as if these involved unbelief. Nothing of the sort. It is time this were clearly and emphatically asserted.

Deniers of the Christian faith must give us arguments, not assumptions. I make bold to say that the intellect of history and of to-day is on the side of the gospel of Christ. It is easy to throw dust in the eyes of readers by false innuendoes. Let us appeal to "the common sense of most."

I, like Dr. Johnson, find my religion "in a book," and that Book is the Bible. There many of the noblest intellects of the world have found their religion. I instance Bishop Butler, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, Bishop Westcott, and could adduce a host of gifted men and women. Are their testimonies not as valid as any novelist, or any other writers, or any other witnesses?

I accept the Bible as the Word of God, I believe myself to be a sinner, full, by nature, of guilt and corruption. Do they rightly know their hearts who deem themselves otherwise? I believe not. I feel my deep, tremendous need of a Saviour. My need is met when I receive by simple faith the atoning

work of Christ. I believe in Christ as the Son of God, Who is also God the Son. The Bible says that whoever receives Him as his Saviour has life, and whoever rejects Him has not life—and I believe it.

Thus faith expresses itself in a course of conduct which is pure and kind and unselfish, and full of the service of humanity. In so far as my faith is real I live in love to God and man. I seek to help others. The poor, the suffering, the disadvantaged are those I most strive to help.

History discloses the reality of this faith, individual experience confirms it. Let who will assail it, "on this Rock I stand." By this I can live tranquilly and usefully. And in this faith I shall die in peace and hope. Judged by these standards I know of no adequate rival to the Evangelical Christian Faith.

DINSDALE T. YOUNG.

Central Hall, Westminster.

FROM THE REV. H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS

To the Editor

Sir,—While I am interested I am also amazed at what your contributors conceive to be their religion.

They state very frankly what is "my religion," but I should like to ask them what is their conception of true religion apart from themselves? What

is their final court of appeal in dealing with such a subject? From what do they deduct their beliefs?

Not one of the writers refers to the Bible, which is the only authoritative and infallible revelation of true religion. Without for the moment insisting for any specific interpretation of the Book, one is almost shocked that there is no definite reference made thereto, but rather a display of ignorance of its affirmations.

There is no acknowledgment of sin, whatever their definition of that term might be: neither is there any expressed faith in Christ as a Redeemer; nor any reference to the Divine Paraclete as the enlightener of the human mind.

Surely one is justified in expecting of any who proclaim to the world what they call "my religion" manifestoes which, without requiring rigid definitions and interpretations, might contain some reference to the revelation of God in and through the Divine Logos, also some reference, with reverence, to such a statement as "Christ died for our sins." Eliminate these two fundamental truths from the history of the last nearly 2,000 years, and what have you left?

In the light of the Bible, the content of which no living man is accountable for, the articles "My Religion" fall far short of what that Book claims to be the true and only religion for mankind.

H. Tydeman Chilvers.

*Metropolitan Tabernacle, S.E.*11.

FROM GIPSY SMITH

To the Editor

Sir,—In response to your request that I should give my comment on the series of articles on "My Religion," I am unable to do justice to the matter in the space you give me.

The way the writers express themselves is illuminating in many ways. I confine myself to one line of thought—namely, the want of real knowledge about spiritual things.

Surely those who confess that they have no faith in revealed religion as taught by Jesus in the New Testament and no faith in the divinity of Jesus, cannot be looked up to by intelligent people as experts. They cannot be any authority for those who are earnestly and honestly looking for truth and light. We would not turn to one who confessed he had no taste for music and knew nothing about it for an expert opinion about the works of Beethoven, the fugues of Bach, or the scherzos of Chopin.

Here in Cambridge it is the expert who is listened to, the man who knows. The man who does not know cannot impart knowledge. Take the world of Nature. Who would go to one who had lived all his life in a narrow slum, and had never seen a green field bathed with summer sunshine or knew the marvels and wonders of Nature, to describe the richness of the rose, the beauty of the bluebell, the

poetry of the primrose; to paint the opening of the gates of the morning without a creak on their hinges, or to tell of the magic of their silent close at nightfall, while the feathered vespers fill the air; to explain how God took a little vapour from a muddy street and kissed it into a rainbow and it became an arched bridge on which angels might stand and watch the storm die? You go to one who has lived with Nature, caught her moods and knows how to teach and tell of her. He *must* know.

Why should a man refuse to believe the Christian faith because he cannot understand all it means? Why not refuse to eat bread because we cannot find out where the first grain of wheat came from? Why not refuse to eat beef and mutton because we cannot explain how two animals living in the same field, eating the same grass, and drinking the same water, turn grass and water into beef and mutton?

Why refuse to believe the soul is immortal? The man who says he does not accept immortality was in existence many months before he arrived in this world. I wonder if it ever occurs to him that since this is a fact, he may be in existence after he departs from this life.

But does not all this take us back to the words Jesus spoke to one who thought he knew it all: "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things? If I tell you of earthly things and ye believe not (know not), how shall ye believe (know) if I tell you of heavenly things?" The natural

man cannot understand the things of God; they are foolishness unto him. Spiritual things are spiritually understood. If a man cannot explain a rose-bud, how can he explain the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley? If beaten by the mysteries of geology, how can he explain the Rock of Ages? If the world of sun, moon, and stars baffles, how much more the Star of Bethlehem and the Day Star from on high. If a tiny hedge-sparrow's egg is unexplainable, and it is—think of the wonder of the colour and the beautiful porcelain!—Whence does that little bird get its pottery? Whence its sky-blue colour? If that is beyond you, how can you expect, with finite mind, to explain God—Jesus Christ!

God is known as we know and love Jesus. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." The Father said of Jesus: "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him." Peter, writing later said: "This voice we heard when we saw His Glory and were with Him in the holy mount."

Religion is not science, or theology, or knowledge. It is an experience of the heart. Paul said: "I live, yet not I; it is Christ that liveth in me." Paul was no fool. His brain was as big as any living to-day, and as well trained.

No scientist is as sure of the working of any law, no physician is as sure of a specific, no mathematician is as sure of an axiom as I am that Jesus Christ came into my gipsy tent and converted my

rough, swearing, drinking, pilfering gipsy father into a clean, tender, honourable, strong, beautiful Christian man. Without Bible, books, or bishops, that life which was a terror became winsome and lovely until his motherless children were won to the same Lord, the same faith, the same surrender. Yes, Jesus came into that tent and kissed it till it shines like an old cathedral. Can Mr. Arnold Bennett explain this miracle, apart from the religion of the New Testament, taught by the Divine Christ?

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." It is not knowledge of the head, but an experience of the heart, and therefore it becomes heart knowledge.

GIPSY SMITH.

Romany Tan, Cambridge.

To the Editor

Sir,—The novelists who are writing about the Christian religion are seeking to destroy the faith, the fruit of which they are daily enjoying.

Christ gave us a test: "If any man will do His (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Will the writers of these articles honestly and sincerely apply the test?

S. CAMPBELL.

S. Kensington.

To the Editor

Sir,—One fact stands out from all the interesting articles yet published—that the writers will not accept a religion that does not satisfy their finite intellects. In other words, reason and understanding must precede faith.

The Creator surely may prescribe the manner in which His creatures may approach Him, and it is written, "He that doeth the will of God shall know." Countless numbers do and have known because they have followed the way indicated in Holy Scripture and interpreted by all branches of the Catholic Church.

H. W. BRAITHWAITE.

Abbey House, Victoria Street, S.W. 1.

To the Editor

Sir,—I do not propose to write anything further about Christian dogma. I was asked to state *my* religious views, and I stated them, as briefly and plainly as possible. That they should arouse resentment was inevitable; that people should find in my articles arrogance and inconsistency, I regret. I have no pretension to be an expert on religious dogma. I have no desire to force my views on others, much less to "float" a new religion.

Yours faithfully,

ARNOLD BENNETT.

75, *Cadogan Square, S.W.* 1.

CHALLENGE TO MR. BENNETT

CHALLENGE TO MR. BENNETT

By DR. NORWOOD

Minister of the City Temple

Dr. Norwood, who was referred to by Mr. Arnold Bennett in his chapter, "The Dilemma of Christianity," as "rude, angry, and inaccurate," replies below.

MR. ARNOLD BENNETT, having expressed his opinion of myself with perfect candour, remarks, "The one answer to such deplorable performances as those of Dr. Norwood and the Anglican Press is silence. I point out their spirit and leave the thing there."

Many will regret this decision. They are much more interested in Mr. Bennett's views upon religion than in his opinions of individuals. They would rather that, instead of breaking entirely new ground in his second article, he had cleared up the ambiguities of his first. One of the penalties of such leadership as Mr. Bennett has achieved is that

a loose statement, to which we all are prone, is embarrassing to his friends as well as of advantage to his opponents. If Mr. Bennett should write a third article, it is to be hoped that he will spare time to clear up certain statements in the first which attracted such wide attention. I will refrain just now from following him into the new territory, at least until after the third article may have been written.

I pointed out in my first reply that after stating, "I do not believe, and never have at any time believed, in the immortality of the soul," he subsequently added: "On a balance of probabilities I am inclined to accept the theory of a future life." That seems to me inconsistent.

Under the same category of absolute unbelief he also included "heaven and hell," but later said, "I think that every act counts, for ever, either for or against the ultimate fulfilment of happiness." That, likewise, seems inconsistent to me.

It rather appears as if, while looking the other way, he has inadvertently walked backwards into the Christian camp. Christians are not committed to any pictorial representation of either post-mortem state, but only to the eternal validity and consequence of right and wrong.

He also said that conscience, which seems to him an argument for the existence of God "more cogent than the rather physical argument from design," is "a force which tends always in the direction of justice, mercy, and kindness." Unless both specialists and ordinary people are entirely mistaken, there are often no more merciless and cruel deeds than some that are done with a perfectly sound conscience. I wish he would clear up that point for us.

He also said, "I absolutely dismiss the extraordinary and too convenient notion that a man may safely do as he chooses provided he dies in a certain faith." I entirely agree with him. "I do not believe and never have at any time believed" such a thing. But in vindicating the statement in the second article he says: "I was brought up in the dogma that a deathbed repentance and a sincere declaration of Christian belief would secure heaven for the vilest sinner." There is really, of course, a world of difference between repentance, even of the deathbed variety, coupled with a "sincere declaration of Christian belief," and a man "safely doing as he chooses." I am not discussing either tenet just now, but merely appealing for lucidity.

Mr. Bennett is perplexed because, in referring to his cautious statement, "I should not care to as-

sert that in the field of morals Christ was not the greatest man that ever lived," I called it "a pat on the back for Jesus," and added that, "it was offensive rather than consoling." He concludes the second article with the perfectly charming addendum, "For Christ's moral teaching I have already expressed the very highest admiration."

I am satisfied now that Mr. Bennett does not know how patronising such statements sound, and therefore acquit him of any conscious offence.

I did not dispute Mr. Bennett's right, but I questioned his historical judgment in saying that Christianity is "the least satisfactory" of all the Oriental creeds of which he has knowledge, "save only that of Mohammedanism." I said that in my opinion his opening article did not attain to the same high level which was reached by those who followed him. I said that it did not do justice to his ability and reputation. That was fair comment. I made it in the same frank spirit as I accept his opinion of myself.

There is little to be gained by cross-firing between individuals. The cause is very great, and to many inexpressibly sacred. But I fail to see why my revered friends the bishops should be complimented upon their "admirable spirit of kindliness, toler-

ance, and caution" for saying that he occupies very nearly the Christian position, while I am merely "rude, angry, and inaccurate" for letting go without challenge his own statement that, "broadly speaking, the Christian dogma does not enter into my social, spiritual, or intellectual life at all." To me it seems that excessive amiability involves some obliquity of vision. May we not be frank without being rude? Surely a man who loves a cause may defend it against destructive criticism, especially when the latter is full of inconsistencies.

I have a great respect for Mr. Bennett, and am deeply indebted to him for pleasure and instruction derived from many of his works. But all of us fall below par at times. I have sympathy with a busy author and journalist who is persuaded to plunge into a discussion for which he has not made sufficient direct preparation. Mr. Bennett is scarcely justified, however, with all his versatility, in breaking new ground until he has cleared up the contradictions and inaccuracies involved in his first article.

May I add that these frank discussions of religious difficulties . . . are all to the good? It would be a great pity if mere personal antagonisms obscured the vital issues.

BOOKS OF RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENCE TO RELIGION
By SHAILER MATHEWS *and Thirteen Contributors*
How modern science conceives the universe, and how the conception of God is necessary to complete it. $3.00

RELIGION AND THE MIND OF TODAY
By JOSEPH A. LEIGHTON
A sincere, unbiased, reverent study of the confusion between the spirits of scientific inquiry and religious faith. $2.50

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL
By FELIX ADLER
The Hibbert Lectures of 1923. Dr. Adler's philosophy applied to burning questions of the day. $1.50

RELIGION AND LIFE
By DEAN INGE *and Others*
Six connected chapters by eminent thinkers, on the fundamentals of personal religion.

A CENTURY OF ANGLICAN THEOLOGY
By CLEMENT C. J. WEBB
Theological developments in the Church of England and their relations with modern thought and life. $1.25

RELIGION AND NATURAL LAW
By C. F. RUSSELL
Clears away difficulties between religion and science. $1.25

HUMAN RELATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST
By H. C. CARTER
Applications of Christianity to modern human life. $1.50

VILLAGE SERMONS BY A NOVELIST
By GUSTAV FRENSSEN
Simple, straightforward little talks on Christian essentials. $1.50

CONCERNING CHRIST
By A. C. McNEILE
Fundamental truths of Christianity for the world today. $1.50

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

New York **London**

GTU Library
3 2400 00702 8941

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500